

## **Antibiotics, to use or not to use:**

Antibiotic overuse by children is an increasing concern for parents and health care professionals. The overuse of common antibiotics such as amoxicillin means that more powerful second line antibiotics increasingly have to be used for simple infections. This has a cascade effect, resulting in the slow erosion of doctors' ability to treat serious infection.

In the past, antibiotics have been over-prescribed for simple infections such as colds, which are predominantly viral in nature. A cold caused by a virus will not respond to or require antibiotic treatment.

If your child has a cold, a cough or the flu, antibiotics are not needed. Don't pressure your doctor for an antibiotic because it won't work. Antibiotics are intended for bacterial infections like strep throat. If your child is given an antibiotic always take it exactly as directed and use it for the prescribed amount of time even if your child is feeling better. Don't save the medication to use later or for others, and get rid of whatever is left.

## **Strep Throat**

Strep throat is making its rounds through Hunting Ridge again. Here is a little information from [keepkidshealthy.com](http://keepkidshealthy.com) that may help.

Strep throat is caused by the *Streptococcus pyogenes* bacteria. This infection is most common in children over three years of age and begins with a fever, a red, swollen throat, and tonsils that can have a white coating of pus. Other symptoms often include swollen glands, decreased appetite and a decreased energy level.

If strep throat is suspected, your doctor will do a throat swab to confirm that there is infection with strep bacteria. A rapid antigen test is usually performed in the office. If this test is negative, there is still a small chance that your child has strep and an overnight culture will then be done to see if any strep bacteria grow. It is important to remember that you cannot tell the difference between strep throat and other viral causes of sore throats. Just because there is pus on your child's tonsils, it does not mean that he needs an antibiotic. Antibiotics are only used to treat sore throats that are caused by strep, so if the tests are negative, your child most likely has a virus that will need to clear up on its own.

This infection is easily treated with antibiotics, usually penicillin or amoxicillin (which are now usually prescribed just twice a day). Your child will no longer be contagious after being on an antibiotic for twenty-four hours. It is important to take a complete course of antibiotics to prevent your child from getting rheumatic fever.

The bacteria that causes strep throat is very sensitive to antibiotics, so if your child gets another infection quickly after having strep throat it is likely that he has a new infection. Strep is thought to survive on tooth brushes, so it should be replaced