

to your

Health!

VA PAHCS
Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Health Care System



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Antibiotic Overuse

Patrick Lee, Pharmacy Student, Pharmacy Service

What do you do when you start feeling run down and the sniffles are coming on? Do you rummage through your closet for those old pills you never finished? Taking a pill or two couldn't hurt, could it? It actually can, especially when the medications are antibiotics. Antibiotic resistance is a growing problem throughout the world, and it is mainly caused by overuse and misuse of antibiotics. It occurs when a specific antibiotic is no



See Antibiotic Overuse – page 4

Do you have undiagnosed or untreated Sleep Apnea ?

Robert Reinhardt, RN, Home Telehealth

What is Sleep Apnea?

This is a condition related to sleep quality that significantly impacts health.

The National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute describes this common disorder as causing breathing to stop or get very shallow. Often people who snore may have sleep apnea, but that is not always the case. People with sleep apnea may wake up tired or fall asleep during the day. They may be forgetful or have headaches or high blood pressure that is difficult to treat. Left untreated, sleep apnea can lead to worsening heart disease.

Testing for sleep apnea is done with a sleep study, which in many cases can be done with a simple device the Pulmonary Service (the lung doctors) can provide. The device can be sent home with you for overnight testing in the comfort of your own bed.

There are various treatments available, and the pulmonary specialists will explore the options with you if you are diagnosed with sleep apnea. The new devices available now to treat this condition are much more convenient and comfortable than those used in the past.

See Sleep Apnea– page 6

Tips for Better Sleep?

Cindy Eaton, Ph.D., Health Behavior Coordinator

Habits and behavior can have a major impact on sleep. Having good sleep habits can enhance good sleep and treat sleep difficulties. We usually refer to these good sleep habits as Sleep Hygiene. A lot of people look to medications to help with sleep difficulties, but these tend to only work short-term. In fact, ongoing use of sleep medications may create more sleep difficulties in the long run through dependence and ongoing lack of good sleep habits. Talk with your health care provider about what is right for you. Sleep hygiene is an important part of addressing sleep problems either alone or in combination with other tools like medication or cognitive therapy.

Sleep Hygiene Tips

- Regular Sleep Times. A great way to train your body to sleep well is to go to bed and get up at the same time every day, even on your days off! Your body will be able to establish a regular rhythm, which will then become a habit.

Questions or Comments?

If you have any questions or topics you would like addressed in the [To Your Health](#) newsletter, feel free to contact

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- Get up and try again. If you are not able to fall asleep within 20 minutes of trying to go to sleep, get up and do something calming or boring until you feel sleepy. Then return to bed and try again. It is important to avoid bright lights and the TV when getting up as this will signal your brain that it is time to wake up.
- Avoid caffeine & nicotine. It is best to avoid caffeine (coffee, tea, soda, chocolate, energy drinks, medications) or nicotine (cigarettes, tobacco products) for at least 4-6 hours before going to bed because they are stimulating and can keep you awake.
- Avoid alcohol. Many people believe that alcohol helps them sleep, but after the initial effects, it can actually stimulate the brain and disrupt the quality of sleep. If you are having sleep difficulties, it is best to avoid alcohol for 4-6 hours before going to bed.
- Associate your bed with sleep. Only use your bed for sleep and sex. This will help your body make the connection between your bed and sleep rather than a place to do everything from watching TV to paying bills.
- No napping. It is best to avoid taking naps during the day. That way, you are tired when bedtime comes. If you can't make it through the day without a nap, limit it to less than an hour and at least 6 hours before your scheduled bedtime.
- Sleep routine. You can establish a habit or routine that will signal your body for sleep. Having a hot bath, doing relaxation exercises, stretching, or having a cup of caffeine-free tea are some suggestions. The important part is engaging in the same routine to train your body and mind that it is time for sleep.
- Avoid watching the clock. Checking the clock during the night can actually wake you up. It also reinforces negative thinking about sleep. When you are watching the clock, you are calculating how little sleep you are getting or how little time is left before you need to get up. These thoughts tend to be negative and stimulating, which can make you stay awake even longer.
- Eat right. Eating a healthy diet can improve sleep, but the timing of meals is important, too. Avoid heavy meals before bedtime as they can interrupt sleep. If you are hungry close to bedtime, stick to a light snack or glass of milk.
- Exercise. Regular exercise will help with good sleep. Exercise uses energy and keeps you relaxed when it is time for sleep. If you are having trouble sleeping it is best to avoid rigorous exercise within 4 hours of bedtime.
- Check your sleep space. Make sure your bedroom is

[See Tips for Better Sleep](#)– page 6

Diabetic Foot Ulcers: Risk Factors and Tips on Foot Care

Ellen Feeney, RN, BS, CCM

“Every 30 seconds, somewhere in the world, someone loses a lower limb as a result of diabetes. That’s because diabetes and wounds are a dangerous combination.”

Diabetes is a disease characterized by high blood sugar. It can lead to many complications, including kidney disease, vision changes, and erectile dysfunction. Patients with diabetes are also at a greater risk for foot ulcers. If you have diabetes, even a small foot sore can turn into an ulcer, which can become infected. An infected foot ulcer must be treated; otherwise, it can lead to an amputation. Therefore, proper foot care is extremely important to keep your feet healthy. Remember, you can’t always prevent an ulcer, but you can almost always prevent an amputation.

Why are diabetics at risk for foot ulcers?

People with diabetes are at greater risk for foot ulcers because they have impaired wound healing. As a complication of diabetes, there is decreased blood flow to the feet, making wounds slower to heal. Many people with diabetes also have neuropathy, which can cause reduced sensation in the feet. As a result, they may not know they even have a wound and not get treatment. It only takes one nail or one piece of glass, or even a cut or scrape to injure your foot, resulting in a wound and possibly, an infection. Feet are at more risk for diabetic wounds because they take a beating and we do not look at them as often as we should, so it can be harder to spot a wound. Other considerations that can increase your risk to develop a diabetic foot ulcer are peripheral vascular disease, poor blood sugar control, previous foot ulcers or amputations, diabetic nephropathy (kidney disease), smoking, and ischemia of small and large blood vessels. With proper daily foot care, diabetes management, and wound treatment, amputations can be prevented.

According to the American Diabetes Association, there are many things you can do to keep your feet healthy and prevent foot ulcers:

- Monitor your blood sugar. Work with your provider to keep your blood sugars within a specified target range.
- Check your feet daily. Look for red spots, cuts, swelling, and blisters. If you cannot see the bottoms of your feet, use a mirror or ask someone for help. Look between your toes for moisture or skin breakdown.
- Wash your feet daily with mild soap and water. Check the

temperature of the water to make sure it is not too hot so you do not burn yourself.

- Dry your feet well, especially between your toes.
- Keep your skin soft and smooth. Rub a thin coat of lotion over the tops and bottoms of your feet, but not between your toes. Be cautious of nail salons.
- Wear properly fitting shoes and socks at all times. Check the insides of your shoes before wearing them to make sure that there are no objects, such as pebbles, inside. Do not walk barefoot.
- Trim your toenails. Trim your toenails straight across and file the edges with an emery board or nail file. Professional help is available if you have trouble doing this yourself.
- Exercise regularly. Plan a physical activity program with your provider.
- Keep blood flowing to your feet. Put your feet up when sitting. Wiggle your toes and move your ankles up and down for 5 minutes, two to three times a day. Do not cross your legs for long periods of time.
- Monitor your diet. Work with a dietician.

What should I do if I notice a foot sore or wound?

If you notice the beginnings of a foot sore or find a wound near the foot, seek medical attention immediately, regardless of how big or small it is.

It is important to see your primary care provider for initial evaluation. Your provider may consult Podiatry Services. A podiatrist is a doctor that specializes in managing conditions of the foot, ankle, and other structures of the leg.

You only have one pair of feet. You can still live a full and exciting, fun-filled life with diabetes. Take control of your diabetes, take care of your feet, and most importantly, take care of yourself.



Antibiotic Overuse – continued from page 1

longer as effective in treating an infection as it was before. We use antibiotics to kill off the bacteria that are making us sick. However, like all medications, antibiotics can cause harm when they are not used in the right way.

What happens with Antibiotic Overuse?

An Antibiotics kills the bugs (bacteria) that are sensitive to it. However, the bugs that are resistant to the antibiotic will survive and continue to grow. This can be a problem because infections caused by resistant bacteria are more severe, harder to treat, and last longer. This results in more clinic visits, longer hospital stays, and higher costs of treatment. Incorrect use of antibiotics can also lead to serious problems. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), antibiotics are the cause of 1 out of 5 emergency department visits for drug complications. Antibiotic resistance is such a big deal that the White House wants to spend \$1.2 billion in 2016 to develop new medications and prevent the spread of bugs that do not respond to our current arsenal of drugs.

Can Antibiotics Be Used For The Common Cold Or The Flu?

It's easy to think about antibiotic overuse, but it's really important that we don't ignore the potential for misuse! Often, when people think they are coming down with a cold or the flu, they will either find a bottle of unfinished antibiotics in their medicine cabinet or go to their provider hoping to get a prescription for an antibiotic. It is important to understand that a cold and the flu are caused by viruses. Antibiotics will not treat a cold or the flu because they only work against bacterial infections.

When we try to treat a cold or flu with antibiotics, we are not treating the real cause of the illness, but we are helping other bacteria develop resistance. We will not feel better just because we are taking medicine and we will not stop the infection from spreading to others around us either.

When Is An Antibiotic Appropriate?

Your provider may or may not prescribe an antibiotic for your illness, based on your signs and symptoms: If you have a cold, the flu, or a simple sore throat, you most likely do not need antibiotics. You can take other medications that your provider recommends, get adequate rest, and drink a lot of fluids to help relieve your symptoms. Do not hesitate to seek medical attention and ask your provider about the appropriateness of starting antibiotics if you need an anti-

Illness	Usual Cause		Antibiotic Needed
	Viruses	Bacteria	
Cold/Runny Nose	✓		NO
Bronchitis/Chest Cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	✓		NO
Whooping Cough		✓	Yes
Flu	✓		NO
Strep Throat		✓	Yes
Sore Throat (except strep)	✓		NO
Fluid in the Middle Ear (otitis media with effusion)	✓		NO
Urinary Tract Infection		✓	Yes

biotic! Your provider can help you figure out the best way to improve your health again.

What if I am prescribed an antibiotic?

When you get a prescription for an antibiotic, make sure you follow the directions carefully. You should always finish the entire course of antibiotics even if you are feeling better. Stopping your medicine too early – even when you feel better – can help breed more resistant bugs. Taking your antibiotics exactly as instructed will also decrease the risk of side effects. If your provider tells you to stop an antibiotic, make sure to discard of the leftover pills properly. You should never save your antibiotics to use next time or share them with others because it may not be the same bug.

Take Home Message

- Don't use antibiotics unless it's necessary and appropriate. Sometimes you actually do need the antibiotics.
- If you are prescribed antibiotics, take them as instructed. Complete the entire course of therapy (until all the pills are gone) even if you feel 100% better, unless your provider tells you to stop.
- Finally, do not save your antibiotics for use next time or give them to friends or family.

If you keep these simple things in mind, you can do your part to help stop the spread of antibiotic resistance and minimize the chance of developing adverse effects to the medication!



Healthy Recipes

Creamy Squash Soup with Shredded Apples

This quick-to-fix soup is bursting with warm-you-up flavor serve with a crisp green salad and crusty whole-wheat bread

Ingredients

- 2 boxes (16 oz each) Frozen pureed winter (butternut) squash.
- 2 Medium apples (Golden Delicious or Gala)
- 1 Tbsp Olive oil
- 1/2 tsp Pumpkin pie spice
- 2 cans (12 oz each) Fat-free evaporated milk
- 1/4 tsp Salt
- 1/8 tsp Ground black pepper



Directions

1. Place the frozen squash in a microwave-safe dish. Cover loosely. Defrost in the microwave on medium power for 5-10 minutes, until mostly thawed.
2. Meanwhile, peel then shred the apples using a grater or food processor, or peel and finely chop apples into thin strips. Set aside ¼ cup.
3. Warm oil in a 4-quart saucepan over medium heat. Add all but ¼ cup of the apples. Cook and stir until apples soften, about 5 minutes.
4. Stir in thawed squash and pumpkin pie spice.
5. Add the evaporated milk about ½ cup at a time, stirring after each addition.
6. Season with salt and pepper.
7. Cook and stir over high heat just until soup is about to boil.
8. Ladle into individual soup bowls. Top each with a tablespoon of the unused apples. Sprinkle with additional pumpkin pie spice if desired, and serve.

Tip: For chunkier soup, try two bags (14 oz each) frozen diced butternut squash OR cut a fresh butternut into small chunks and place in a microwave-safe dish covered with 1 inch of water. Microwave on high for 5-10 minutes or until squash is tender and can easily be pierced with a fork. Remove skin. Place squash in blender until desired consistency.

Each Serving Provides:

Calories	334
Total Fat	4g
Protein	18g
Carbohydrates	62g
Dietary Fiber	less than 5g
Saturated Fat	1 g
Sodium	370 mg

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 20 minutes

Yields: 4 Servings

Serving Size: 1 1/2 Cup

<https://healthyeating.nhlbi.nih.gov/recipe/detail.aspx?cId=0&rId=75>



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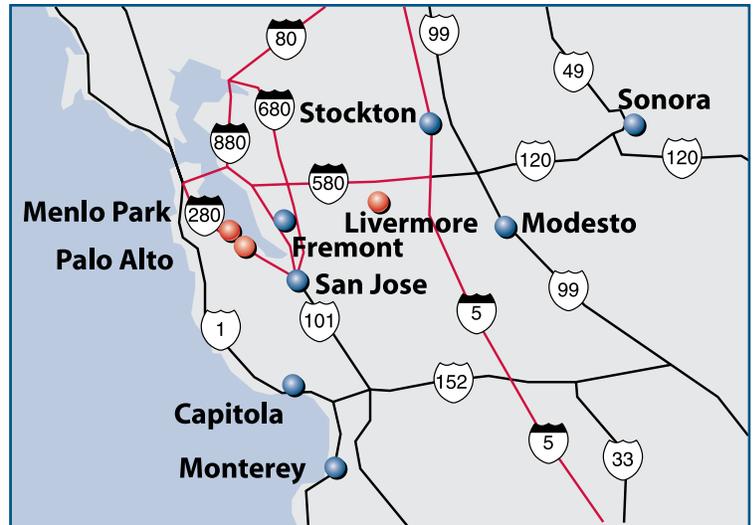
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You can also access the Veterans Health Library (VHL) by going to www.veteranshealthlibrary.org or on My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov.



 **VA Palo Alto Health Care System Division**

 **VA Palo Alto Health Care System
Community Based Outpatient Clinic**

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Am I at risk for Sleep Apnea?

You may be at risk if you have two or more of the following conditions. This is known as the STOP-BANG assessment.

S – Snoring (If someone has witnessed you snoring, and/or having pauses in your breathing while sleeping)

T – Tiredness, fatigue or daytime sleepiness (Often with a desire to take a nap within several hours of waking)

O - Observed Apneas

P - Pressure (history of high blood pressure)

B - Body Mass Index (BMI) Greater than 35

A - Age older than 50 years

N - Neck Circumference Greater than 15.75 inches (40 cm)

G - Gender (male)

You should discuss your symptoms with your PACT medical team. You should also notify your medical team if you have been diagnosed with sleep apnea but are not following a treatment plan.

Learn more about sleep apnea at: http://www.paloalto.va.gov/services/pulmonary/res_sleepapnea.asp



Tips for Better Sleep– continued from page 2

quiet, dark, and comfortable. A cooler room with enough bedding to stay warm can help you fall asleep. Make sure you have a way to limit light. Blackout curtains or an eye mask can accomplish this. Using earplugs can also limit noise and keep sounds from disturbing your sleep.

- Keep your routine the same. Even if you have a bad night sleep, it is important to keep your schedule and activities the same. Don't avoid activities because you are tired as this will reinforce insomnia.
- Get help. There is treatment available for insomnia through the VA. Cognitive-behavioral therapy for insomnia (CBT-I) has been shown to be very effective in treating sleep difficulties. Ask your primary care provider for a referral to CBT-I or contact the Mental Health Center for more information.

