

Can we give antibiotics for fewer days?

by Jaimie Samuel, DO

Antibiotics are an important tool pediatricians use to treat common infections. They are not effective against viral infections but they may be needed to treat ear infections (*acute otitis media*), urinary tract infections (*UTI*), pneumonia, skin infections, etc.

For decades 10 day courses of antibiotics were prescribed for these infections. To help slow antibiotic resistance and decrease side effects, recent research has studied shorter courses of antibiotics. It also makes things easier for parents and may cost less. Sometimes shorter is just as effective and sometimes it is actually better. Don't be surprised if we discuss these changes with you!

Ear Infections (Acute Otitis Media):

Acute otitis media is the most common condition in children which may need antibiotics. But many ear infections can be viral and improve on their own without antibiotics. So a "watchful waiting" approach is best for infants 6 months of age and older with a mild-moderate unilateral (just one ear) infection.

If antibiotics are needed, the AAP recommends length of treatment based on severity and the child's age. For severe symptoms or for patients under 2 years of age, the standard 10 day course of antibiotics is still recommended. For children 2-5 years of age with non-severe infections, a 7 day course is enough. Ages 6 and older with non-severe infections, a 5 day course of antibiotics is recommended.

Urinary Tract Infection (UTI):

For an uncomplicated UTI (without fever,) a course of 3-5 days of antibiotics works well. For a more complicated UTI (fever or symptoms of kidney infection), a longer course of 10 days is recommended.

Community Acquired Pneumonia (CAP)

Studies have shown children who received a 5 day "short course" of antibiotics did as well as those getting 10 days. There were less side effects from the antibiotics with 5 day courses.

Skin and Soft Tissue Infection:

Impetigo (strep and/or staph bacteria in the skin) and abscesses need antibiotic treatment. Uncomplicated skin infections usually need only 5-7 days. For minor infections, treatment can be as short as 3 days if clinically resolved. The length of antibiotic treatment is based on how quickly your child responds.

Streptococcal Pharyngitis:

NO changes to the standard 10 day course of antibiotics! It takes 10 days to protect your child's heart from rheumatic fever.

These are only guidelines, your doctor will discuss the best course of treatment for your child with you. The doctors at Clarkstown Pediatrics have discussed these changes and thought you should be aware. **We want to use antibiotics carefully so they will work when your child really needs them!**



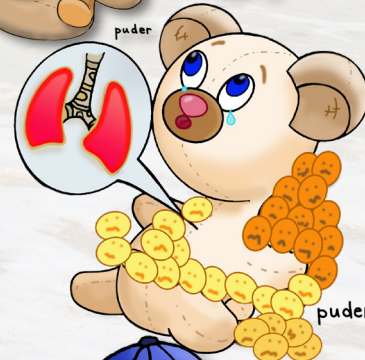
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7?

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