

Title: Antibiotic Associated Diarrhea: What is it and how do you make it better?

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Date: 4/29/2009

Key words: Antibiotic-associated diarrhea, diarrhea, probiotics

Abstract: Consider using probiotics for the prevention of antibiotic-associated diarrhea in children. Evidence suggests that probiotics given for the duration of the course of antibiotics cut the risk of developing diarrhea by almost 50%.

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Antibiotic Basics

Most likely, sometime your child will become ill and his or her doctor will recommend medicines called “antibiotics.” These medicines are used to treat germs called bacteria. Bacteria commonly cause many childhood infections including ear infections, strep throat, urinary tract infections, and pneumonia. They are typically taken for 7 to 10 days to help fight your child’s infection. Common names of antibiotics include:

- Amoxicillin
- Augmentin
- Zithromax
- Omnicef
- Keflex
- Bactrim



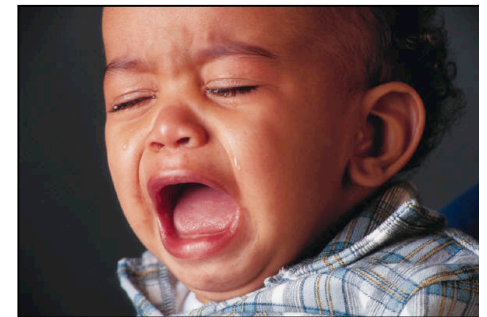
When Should I Call the Doctor?

- If your child has bloody diarrhea
 - *This means your child may have a more serious infection*
- If your child is throwing up so much that he or she cannot keep water down
 - *This means your child may be at higher risk for dehydration*
- If your child no longer has wet diapers for three hours or more, or cries without tears
 - *This means your child is dehydrated and may require IV fluids*
- If the diarrhea doesn’t go away in 7-10 days
 - *This means your child may have an ongoing infection*
- If your child develops fevers greater than 102 degrees
 - *This means your child may have another infection*



Antibiotic Associated Diarrhea

What is it and how do you make it better?



A Patient Education Brochure Developed by Jonathan KenKnight, 3rd Year Medical Student in Conjunction with the University of Minnesota

Diarrhea Basics

What is diarrhea?

Diarrhea is a change in bowels that results in stools that are loose and watery.

What causes diarrhea in children?

Germs such as viruses and bacteria commonly cause diarrhea in children. Antibiotics can sometimes cause bacteria.

I thought antibiotics were supposed to help with germs. How do they cause diarrhea?

The large intestine, the part of the body that reabsorbs most of the water in stool naturally contains “good” bacteria. Sometimes antibiotics kill these “good” bacteria and upset the large intestine’s ability to absorb water. This leads to more watery stools.

Some antibiotics, like *Augmentin*, contain an extra medicine to help the antibiotic work better. This extra medicine stays in the large intestine and “holds on” to water, making stools loose and watery.

If my child gets diarrhea with an antibiotic, what can I do?

Some studies show **probiotics** might help. However, not all studies agree. Some show that not only do they help prevent antibiotic associated diarrhea, but also reduce how long the diarrhea lasts. Other studies show that they don’t help. *When looking at all of the studies together, probiotics cut the risk of developing antibiotic associated diarrhea in half.*

If some studies show they don’t work, why would I use probiotics?

Probiotics are considered safe with little to no side effects, and because well-designed studies show benefit, your child can only be helped by probiotics, not harmed. Together with your child’s doctor, discuss probiotics and make a decision about using them.

What is a “probiotic?”

Probiotics are medicines that replace the “good” bacteria in the large intestine, allowing the large intestine to function normally.

But aren’t bacteria bad?

Not all bacteria. The large intestine needs “good” bacteria in order to work normally. These bacteria help further digest food in the intestines.

Where do I get probiotics and are they safe?

Probiotics are found in active culture yogurts and in capsules found at the drug store. There are many different kinds. There are virtually no reported side effects when used appropriately.

They can be taken along with antibiotics to help prevent diarrhea or when diarrhea occurs to cut down the time your child has diarrhea. Ask your doctor about how much to take.

For more information:

Ask your doctor, or check out the following websites:

www.aap.org/publiced/BR_diarrhea.htm
Information on treating diarrhea from the American Academy of Pediatrics

<http://www.mayoclinic.com/health/probiotics/A000389>
Information on probiotics from the Mayo Clinic

