

ANTIBIOTICS

ARE THEY ANTI-LIFE? HOW DO WE DECIDE?

In the first few days of life, an infant's gut flora or intestinal microbiota (microscopic life) is developed initially by colostrum from the mothers' breast, followed by a supply of bifido-bacterium for the next nine to twelve months.

When foods are first introduced, so are a variety of bacteria, signaling the ongoing maturation of the intestinal lining and friendly microbic bacteria.

This delicate balance can be disrupted by a number of factors:

- _ Stressful environment – emotionally or physically unstable
- _ Immunizations –either too early or too clustered
- _ Introducing foods too early – before the body is physiologically ready
- _ Baby foods high in sugar or additives – common in commercial, non-organic
- _ Commercial milk formulas – from dead, devitalized milk
- _ Prescription medications

With an imbalance in the child's intestinal bacteria, pathogenic bacteria have the opportunity to overgrow. This can lead to numerous illnesses as minor as a stomachache or as serious as an infection somewhere in their body. Antibiotics are commonly prescribed at this time.

The concerns would be:

1. In the March 09 issue of the Journal of Pediatrics, a study is discussed that found an increase in asthma in children given antibiotics before the age of one. The more courses they received, the greater their incidence of asthma.
2. Any antibiotic therapy given should directly correlate with a bacterial infection only. They have not been found useful for any viral infections.
3. Because antibiotic medications usually target all bacteria, the bacterial protection that infers immune support in the gut, may also be weakened.
4. Antibiotic therapy by injection can be less disruptive to the gut flora but has been shown to cause sciatic nerve entrapment in some children.
5. Even when antibiotics are used effectively, they can destroy some pathogens while leaving others more resistant to future use.

The following published study shows hope for less unnecessarily prescribed antibiotic use by doctors:

_ A CDC study, published in the journal of the American Medical Assn.,⁴ came from a survey of office based physicians. It found that the number of antibiotic prescriptions for children fell from 46 million in 1989 to 30 million in 2000, even though the number of office visits remained constant.

_ "It's a dramatic decline," said Linda F. McCaig, an epidemiologist at the National Center for Health Statistics, the organization that regularly surveys the prescribing behavior of American physicians. "It's encouraging that parents and physicians may be getting the message about how to use antibiotics appropriately."

_ The study said antimicrobial prescribing rates for children increased by 48% in the United States from 1980 through 1992, until health officials sounded alarms that inappropriate use was contributing to antimicrobial resistance.

⁴ PEDIATRICS Vol. 123 No. 3 March 2009, pp. 1003-1010 (doi: 10.1542/peds.2008-1146) U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, JAMA, June 2002