



## **Medicines: Overuse**

We are a greatly overmedicated society. Many people believe that there is a drug for every symptom. Some health care providers prescribe a drug during every office visit. These habits can convey to our young people that drugs are the answer to life's discomforts. More than \$4 billion per year is spent on over-the-counter drugs for fever, colds, and coughs--many of them unnecessary. Drugs for vomiting and diarrhea are largely ineffective, and these symptoms respond best to dietary changes. Remember that mild symptoms do not require any medication, and moderate symptoms often respond to home remedies. Drugs are not essential to recovery from most illnesses. Life is not a drug-deficient state.

### **Antibiotics Ineffective for Viral Infections**

- More than 90 percent of infections, including colds, coughs, croup, and diarrhea are caused by viruses. Antibiotics ("wonder drugs") kill bacteria. Unfortunately, antibiotics have no effect on viruses. They neither shorten the course of viral illnesses nor reduce symptoms.
- Repeated use of antibiotics increases the likelihood of an allergic reaction. 5 percent to 10 percent of adults are allergic to penicillin.
- All antibiotics have additional side effects, such as wiping out your normal protective bacteria and replacing them with bacteria resistant to the antibiotic.
- Fortunately, the body's own antibodies can destroy viruses.
- Use home remedies or nonprescription medicines for the symptoms of viral illnesses.

### **Nonprescription Medicines for Common Symptoms**

- When your child is sick, your goal is to make him as comfortable as possible. If your child is playing and sleeping normally, do not give nonprescription medicines.
- Give medicines only for symptoms that are causing discomfort, disrupting sleep, or really bothering your child, such as coughing spasms.
- Medicines for symptoms can only partially relieve those symptoms (for example, a fever will be lowered but not to a normal temperature). Medicines for symptoms do not shorten the course of an illness.

**Nonprescription (over-the-counter) medicines can also have side effects.**

\*NOTE: This information is provided as a public educational service. The information does not replace any of the instructions your physician gives you. If you have a medical emergency please call 911 or call the Hospital at (208) 529-6111. If you have questions about your child's care, please call Idaho Falls Pediatrics at (208) 522-4600.