Stop the Spread of Superbugs – Help fight Drug-Resistant Bacteria

For nearly a century, bacteria-fighting drugs known as antibiotics have helped to control and destroy many of the harmful bacteria that can make us sick. But in recent decades, antibiotics have been losing their punch against some types of bacteria. In fact, certain bacteria are now unbeatable with today’s medicines. Sadly, the way we’ve been using antibiotics is helping to create new drug-resistant “superbugs.”

Superbugs are strains of bacteria that are resistant to several types of antibiotics. Each year these drug-resistant bacteria infect more than 2 million people nationwide and kill at least 23,000 according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Drug-resistant forms of tuberculosis, gonorrhea, and staph infections are just a few of the dangers we now face.

Antibiotics are among the most commonly prescribed drugs for people. They’re also given to livestock to prevent disease and promote growth. Antibiotics are effective against bacterial infections, such as strep throat and some types of pneumonia, diarrheal diseases, and ear infections. But these drugs don’t work at all against viruses, such as those that cause colds or flu.

Unfortunately, many antibiotics prescribed to people and to animals are unnecessary. And the overuse and misuse of antibiotics helps to create drug-resistant bacteria.

Here’s how that might happen. When used properly, antibiotics can help destroy disease-causing. But if you take an antibiotic when you have a viral infection like the flu, the drug won’t affect the viruses making you sick. Instead, it’ll destroy a wide variety of bacteria in your body, including some of the “good” bacteria they help you digest food, fight infection, and stay healthy. Bacteria that are tough enough to survive the drug will have a chance to grow and quickly multiply. These drug-resistant strains may even spread to other people.

One common superbug increasingly seen outside hospitals is methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). These bacteria don’t respond to methicillin and related antibiotics. MRSA can cause skin infections and, in more serious cases, pneumonia or bloodstream infections.

A MRSA skin infection can appear as one or more pimples or boils that are swollen, painful, or hot to the touch. The infection can spread through even a tiny cut or scrape that comes into contact with these bacteria. Many people recover from MRSA infections, but some cases can be life-threatening. The CDC estimates that more than 80,000 aggressive MRSA infections and 11,000 related deaths occur each year in the US.

Blocking Harmful Bacteria:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- If you’re sick, make sure your doctor has a clear understanding of your symptoms. Discuss whether an antibiotic or a different type of treatment is appropriate for your illness.
If antibiotics are needed, take the full course exactly as directed. Don’t save the medicine for a future illness, and don’t share with others.

Maintain a healthy lifestyle – including proper diet, exercise, and good hygiene – to help prevent illness, thereby helping to prevent the overuse or misuse of medications.

7 Steps for a Healthy Heart – From diet to exercise to cholesterol, AHA identifies 7 factors for Cardiovascular Health.

The American Heart Association has identified seven “simple” steps you can take for a healthy heart. But the road to better cardiovascular health will take some work.

Life’s Simple 7” categorizes cardiovascular health as Poor, Intermediate, or Ideal in each of seven areas. Published in Circulation: Journal of the American Heart Association, the AHA says ideal cardiovascular health for adults is defined by these health measures:

1. Never smoked or quit more than a year ago.
2. A healthy body mass index (BMI), an estimate of body fat determined by a formula using weight and height.
3. Physical activity, and the more the better. The new measure says at least 150 minutes per week of moderate-intensity exercise is necessary for ideal health, or 75 minutes weekly of vigorous physical activity.
5. Fasting blood glucose less than 100 milligrams/deciliter, a fasting measure of blood sugar level.
6. Total cholesterol of less than 200 milligrams/deciliter.
7. Eating a healthy diet. Four to five of the key components of a healthy diet are followed. For a 2,000 calorie diet, these include:
   • At least 4.5 cups of fruits and vegetables per day
   • A least two 3.5 oz. serving of fish per week, preferably oily fish
   • At least three 1-ounce servings of fiber-rich whole grains per day
   • Limiting sodium to less than 1,500 milligrams a day
• Drinking no more than 36 ounces weekly of sugar-sweetened beverages

The AHA hopes the seven factors could improve the cardiovascular health of Americans by 20% by the year 2020, and also reduce deaths from cardiovascular-related diseases and strokes by 20%.

The AHA says its goals represent the first time it has adopted better health as a principal goal and that it has developed a new online resource, “My Life Check,” at www.heart.org/MyLifeCheck. By completing the assessment, people can determine what they need to do to achieve better cardiovascular health.

“To date, there has been great success in reducing disability and death from heart disease and stroke, in part through aggressive improvements in the diagnosis and treatment of these diseases and in limited uptake of measures to prevent heart disease and stroke,” Clyde W. Yancy, MD, president of the American Heart Association, says in the news release. “We achieved our 2010 goal of reducing death by heart disease and stroke by 25%, earlier and by a wider margin than we had targeted.”

Still, he says, too many people “continue to have unrelenting exposure to known important risk factors for heart disease and stroke to the point that we are likely to begin seeing an increase in these diseases, and at an earlier age.”

TUNA PASTA CASSEROLE

4 ounces dried whole-wheat rotini (about 1 ½ cups)
Cooking Spray
1 16 ounce bag frozen mixed vegetables, such as carrots, broccoli and cauliflower blend, thawed
2 5.5 ounce cans low-sodium chunk light tuna, packed in water, flaked
1 10.75 ounce can low-fat condensed cream of chicken soup (lowest sodium available)
½ cup chopped bottled roasted red bell peppers, rinsed before chopping
½ cup fat free half and half
1 tsp all-purpose seasoning blend
¾ cup lightly crushed (about ¼ inch pieces) low-sodium whole-grain crackers (about 34 squares)
¼ cup shredded or grated parmesan cheese

Prepare the pasta using the package directions, omitting the salt and oil. Drain well in a colander. Transfer to a large bowl. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Lightly spray a 2 quart glass casserole dish with cooking spray. Stir the mixed vegetables, tuna, soup, roasted peppers, half-and-half, and seasoning blend into the pasta until combined. Transfer to the casserole dish. Sprinkle with the crackers and parmesan. Bake, uncovered for 25 to 30 minutes or until the casserole is warmed through and the topping is golden brown.

Peach – Blueberry Ginger-Oat Crisp

4 cups sliced fresh peaches or frozen unsweetened peach slices, thawed and undrained
3 tbs packed brown sugar
2 tbs all purpose flour
½ tsp ground ginger
1 cup fresh or frozen unsweetened blueberries, thawed
¼ cup water
8 gingersnaps
2/3 cup quick-cooking oats
¼ cup chopped pecans (optional)
2 tbs butter melted

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. In a large bowl toss together peach slices, brown sugar, flour, and ginger. Add blueberries and the water; toss to combine. Spoon fruit mixture into a 2-quart square baking dish. Bake, uncovered for 20 minutes. Place gingersnaps in a heavy plastic bag, seal bag and use a rolling pin and crush cookies into ¼ to ½ inch pieces. Transfer cookies to a medium bowl. Stir in rolled oats and, if desired, chopped pecans. Stir in butter until well mixed. Sprinkle over partially baked fruit mixture. Bake for 15 to 20 minutes more or until fruit is bubbly and topping is lightly browned. Cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes. Serve warm. If desired, top with whipped topping.