

Pointers For Parents

For Parents And Kids, Antibiotics Are A Matter Of Taste

(NAPSA)—As every parent knows, bacterial infections, such as ear infections and strep throat, are very common in children. In fact, two out of three children will have at least one ear infection before their third birthday. Perhaps because viral respiratory infections like a cold or the flu often precede these kinds of bacterial infections, kids do seem to get sick more often during cold and flu season. While there are steps parents can take to help children avoid becoming sick this winter—regular physical activity, a well-balanced diet and getting enough sleep—many parents will still find themselves taking a sick child to the pediatrician sometime between November and March.

“Unfortunately for kids and their parents, bacterial infections cannot be avoided,” said W. Manfred Gooch, III, M.D., clinical professor of pediatrics, University of Utah School of Medicine. “But quickly and effectively managing the illness may decrease the children’s and parent’s stress in dealing with the infection.”

When a physician confirms that a child has a bacterial infection, an appropriate oral antibiotic may be prescribed to help the child feel better. Taking that medication, how-



ever, can be a trying experience for both parent and child. While there are many reasons a child might resist medication, taste of the medication is overwhelmingly the most common complaint.

According to a survey sponsored by Abbott Laboratories of nearly 1,000 parents with children under 12 years old, 73 percent said their child had shown or voiced dislike for the taste of certain liquid antibiotics. Many parents try mixing the medication with their own version of Mary Poppins’ “spoonful of sugar,” such as favorite foods or drinks, to make the medicine more palatable for their kids. However, some antibiotics may lose their effect if mixed in this way.

The best solution may be asking the child’s pediatrician for help. The survey found that more than 70 percent of parents believe

that taste should be an important consideration for their pediatrician when they prescribe a liquid antibiotic for their children. Twenty-four percent of parents surveyed say they have asked a physician to prescribe a particular antibiotic because of its taste, while another 21 percent have asked them to avoid a medication for the same reason.

The survey also suggests that parents should discuss the dosing plan for medications. Forty-one percent of parents have children who complain about dosage frequency and 37 percent say that their kids object to the number of days that the medicine must be taken. By bringing these issues to the attention of their pediatricians, parents and doctors can work together to find the best treatment solutions.

“When I prescribe a liquid antibiotic, I look for a treatment that is effective, tolerable and convenient,” said Dr. Gooch. “Parents need to talk with their pediatricians to find an antibiotic that works for their child and that tastes good. This helps ensure that children will take the full dose of the medication over the entire course of the regimen, which will maximize its effectiveness.”