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HEALING

Antibiotic Insensitivity: Part I

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Antibiotics are chemical substances that are produced by certain microorganisms and have the capability to inhibit the growth of or destroy bacteria or other microbes. Penicillin and tetracycline are two common antibiotics. You can usually find some type of common antibiotic in the medicine box in any home.

Antibiotics have been life saving against serious microbial infections of the body. However, antibiotics are easily misused. For instance, they are often wrongly taken in cases of colds and influenza. But antibiotics have no effect on these ailments, as these are due to viruses rather than microbes, and antibiotics have no effect on viruses.

Often patients will begin to feel better after being on an antibiotic medication for a couple of days and therefore stop taking the drug. Such brief treatment actually desensitizes the microbe to the drug, making the microbe more resistant to it in

future use. This insensitivity may even be transmitted to other microbes. Antibiotic must be taken throughout the prescribed time so that the germ is truly incapacitated and doesn't survive as a weakened microbe. Desensitization may also occur if the initial dosage is not sufficient to incapacitate the bacteria.

It takes several days for specific identification and sensitivity tests to be completed. The practitioner must often prescribe an antibiotic before he knows exactly which bacterium is involved and which drug it is sensitive to. He must rely upon clinical signs and experience to initiate treatment. There are times when the "wrong" drug is started, which also tends to lead to possible desensitization of the microbe. It has taken about thirty years for certain classes of enterococci to become insensitive to a widely used drug, vancomycin. This is especially serious because there is at this time no satisfactory substitute for the drug. Some strains of tuberculosis and other serious diseases are totally resistant to all presently known antibiotics.

The future is not as gloomy as it may seem, though, for there are alternatives to antibiotics that often work as well or even better. The Ayurvedic approach is such that the body is kept in balance and the immune system at peak efficiency so that infections and various inflammations seldom manifest. If there is a lapse in balance, then rebalance and specific herbal treatments may be necessary to bring the body back to health. This is a preferred, wise and age-old system of health. Outside of the US, it is often easier to find competent vaidyas, traditional Ayurvedic doctors. Vaidyasmay occasionally use antibiotics if the condition warrants, but usually prescribe

herbal concoctions that will accomplish the same effect.

Another approach is homeopathy. This great medical science is often overlooked and snubbed, but it is an excellent, valid method of keeping the body healthy. Its greatest strength is that it will not harm the body during the healing process, as allopathic drugs may. By artful interviews and physical examination, the practitioner is able to assess the entire clinical picture, including possible psychological influences, and thereby select a remedy that will eliminate the unwholesome condition. Chinese medicine offers yet another alternative, aided by the use of acupuncture to help to stabilize and balance the flow of the Chi in the channels throughout the body. We will further discuss some of the methods of these alternative systems in the next issue.

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