

# What you should know about ANTIBIOTICS

## What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics fight infection by killing the bacteria and preventing it from reproducing.

## What are the benefits?

Antibiotics help the body overcome illness.

They are the best course of treatment for many painful infections such as tooth decay, bladder infections and UTIs – none of which are relieved by morphine or other pain medications. The use of antibiotics to treat specific infections such as these can make a person more comfortable.

## What are the risks?

Sometimes, in the process of killing the 'bad' bacteria in the body, antibiotics can also destroy the protective 'good' bacteria, resulting in fungal infections of the mouth, digestive tract and vagina. When antibiotic therapy results in the loss of too many protective bacteria, an infection known as Clostridium Difficile (C. Diff) can invade the body. C. Diff causes colon inflammation and severe diarrhea, and typically occurs after prolonged use of antibiotic medications.

Antibiotics may also produce significant side effects such as nausea and vomiting.

## What does this mean for me?

You should know that antibiotic medications fight infection and may relieve discomfort, but they will not cure a progressive, terminal illness. When antibiotics are used to treat an illness for which there is no cure, taking them can prolong the dying process, and may prevent you from experiencing a peaceful, natural death.

## Do I have a choice?

Yes. You have the right to control your own health care decisions. If you want to receive antibiotics, you should think about specific instances when you will and will not want them used. Whatever you decide, talk first with your family and doctor.

This brochure was designed to give a general description of antibiotics, some pros and cons of their use, and an outline of your options for choosing whether or not you want

antibiotics to be a part of your Advance Care Plan.



## **What is Advance Care Planning?**

Advance care planning is a thoughtful process used to plan for future healthcare choices. It involves personal reflection and discussions with loved ones and healthcare providers. Your plan should include both a Living Will and the designation of a Healthcare Surrogate who can make decisions on your behalf if you're unable to speak for yourself.

The best time to think and talk about future medical decisions is when you are well, rather than in a time of medical crisis.

## **Why should I have an Advance Care Plan?**

Advances in medicine and technology have given us the ability to sustain life through artificial or mechanical interventions. In cases where patients are terminally ill with no hope of recovery, these interventions can prolong the dying process and prevent them from experiencing a peaceful, natural death.

By establishing an Advance Care Plan while you are well, you can make sure that your wishes are honored later, should you become unable to speak for yourself.

## **Does an Advance Care Plan encourage my death?**

**NO.** You are not signing an agreement that says that you wish to die. You are making a choice for the future, about the kind of medical treatment you wish to receive when there is little or no hope for recovery.

### **Advance Care Planning Helps:**

**YOU** make treatment decisions that can affect your life.

**YOUR FAMILY** have peace of mind knowing your decisions.

**YOUR PHYSICIAN** by providing information about the kind of care you want.

## **How can Empath Health help me?**

Empath Health provides advance care planning services, free of charge, to anyone who wishes to communicate their future medical treatment decisions. Our living will is used by many hospital systems across the country. It is acceptable to doctors and easily understood by the public.

Empath Health's advance care planning services was established through a partnership of physicians, elder care providers and community citizens. Our focus is providing holistic and compassionate advance care planning that respects human dignity, as well as each individual's best interests and personal wishes.



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