Doctors Prescribing Fewer Antibiotics To Kids

Mike Stobbe, AP
The push to get pediatricians to stop prescribing antibiotics for the wrong illnesses is paying off a bit, a new government report found. Since the early 1990s, there's been a 10 percent drop in prescription rates for antibiotics for kids 14 and younger, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Thursday. Antibiotics are often used — but don't work — against viral illnesses like colds and flu. Antibiotics fight infections caused by bacteria. Misuse can lead to antibiotic resistance. Experts say doctors inappropriately prescribe antibiotics more than 50 percent of the time, and more often with respiratory infections.
The CDC found larger declines — about 25 percent — in how often doctors used antibiotics against sore throats, colds and some other upper respiratory infections, but there was no significant change in how often they prescribed the drugs for ear infection, bronchitis and sinusitis. The new findings represent progress, but also suggest that doctors are still prescribing antibiotics too often, said Dr. Lauri Hicks, a CDC epidemiologist who worked on the study. "The bad news is we still have a long way to go," she said.
The CDC study was the government's first look at the issue in about a decade. It was based on an annual survey of doctors' offices, and compared rates from 1993-1994 to 2007-2008. The improvement could be partly driven by rapid diagnostic tests that help doctors pinpoint whether a sore throat is caused by a virus or strep bacteria, CDC researchers said. The study also found fewer parents took their kids to doctors for upper respiratory infections, which could be thanks to a vaccine against pneumococcal bacteria that became available in 2000. A public health campaign about antibiotics may have also had some impact, CDC officials said.

Doctors have not always followed recommendations to cut back on antibiotics, partly because of pressure from parents, said Dr. Kenneth Bromberg, chairman of pediatrics at the Brooklyn Hospital Center in New York. Moms and dads who have been up with sick, screaming infants in the middle of the night tend to expect more from a doctor than advice to keep an eye on the problem. Often, they want antibiotics, and may not stop at one doctor to get them, he said.

"In this new age of consumerism, they will go somewhere else and get what they want," Bromberg said. The taxing nature of ear infections may be why the CDC didn't find a decrease in the antibiotic prescribing rate for that problem, he added.

Source URL (retrieved on *04/02/2015 - 6:21am*):
http://www.surgicalproductsmag.com/news/2011/09/doctors-prescribing-fewer-antibiotics-kids