



# Antibiotic Stewardship at HCM

A Q&A with James Partin, MD, HCM Chief Medical Officer

## WHAT ARE ANTIBIOTICS, AND WHAT DO THEY DO?

Antibiotics are medicines that treat bacterial infections like strep and staph. When used properly, antibiotics eliminate “bad” bacteria so that you get better.

## WHAT DON'T ANTIBIOTICS TREAT?

Antibiotics do not treat viruses like the flu, the common cold and upper respiratory infections. Antibiotics will not help you feel better when you have a viral infection.

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT KIND OF INFECTION I HAVE?

Knowing what kind of infection you have determines what kind of medicine you should take. Assuming that you need antibiotics puts you at risk for taking the wrong kind of medicine and staying sick longer. Patients and providers must take time to examine the pros and cons of an antibiotic for each specific case.

## WHAT IS “ANTIBIOTIC STEWARDSHIP,” AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

Antibiotic stewardship is the responsible use of the right antibiotics for the right infections for the right amount of time.

Doing so:

- Improves the quality of patient care
- Increases treatment success
- Reduces the rate of harmful *C. diff* intestinal infections
- Reduces the rate of antibiotic resistance (“super bugs”)

## HOW DOES HILL COUNTRY MEMORIAL PRACTICE ANTIBIOTIC STEWARDSHIP?

HCM’s “Antibiotic Stewardship Program” ensures the right antibiotics are used only when needed. The HCM laboratory now uses a new machine that examines the DNA of bacteria, viruses and more to determine what kind of infection a patient has within one to two hours rather than days. This means that patients are treated with the right medicine and spend less time in the hospital.

Additionally, each positive bacterial identification is reviewed to ensure that patients receive the most specific antibiotic possible. If an antibiotic is used for more than 72 hours, the patient’s case is reviewed to determine if a better or alternative treatment is needed.

HCM also consults with an infectious disease specialist who reviews hospital-wide antibiotic use monthly to ensure wise prescribing of antibiotics.

## WHAT SHOULD I ASK MY HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHEN HE OR SHE PRESCRIBES AN ANTIBIOTIC?

You should ask: Are the antibiotics necessary? Is this the right medicine? Is the length of the treatment appropriate? Think “right reason, right drug, right duration.”

## WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO TAKE THE RIGHT ANTIBIOTIC?

When you take an unnecessary antibiotic, or the wrong antibiotic it exposes the bad bacteria in your body to medicine that doesn’t kill them. This exposure actually makes bacteria more resistant to any treatment. We call this “antibiotic resistance,” and such resistant bacteria infect at least two million Americans annually according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Resistant bacteria are often called “super bugs.” Overuse and misuse of antibiotics puts you and the community at risk of being exposed to super bugs.

**The best thing you can do for your health and the community is to discuss your treatment options with your health care provider and only take antibiotics when necessary.**