

# What You Should Know About Antibiotics

## What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics work by killing bacteria and keeping them from multiplying.

## What are the benefits?

Antibiotics stop infection from spreading and help the body get well.

They are the best way to treat painful conditions like skin infections, urinary tract infections, and tooth decay.

Pain pills may not work for infections like these, but antibiotics can help ease the soreness they cause.

## What are the risks?

Antibiotics may upset your stomach. They may also cause unpleasant side effects such as nausea and vomiting.

Sometimes, when antibiotics kill the 'bad' bacteria, they also destroy some of the 'good' bacteria that live inside your body and protect you from germs.

Using antibiotics for long periods of time can put you at risk for other illnesses, such as *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff), or yeast infections in your mouth and vagina. C. diff is a type of infection that causes fever, stomach cramps, and severe watery diarrhea.

## What does this mean for me?

You should know that antibiotics fight infection and may ease discomfort, but they will not cure a terminal illness.

If antibiotics cannot help you get well, then taking them may do more harm than good. They can cause side effects that make you feel sick, and may prevent you from having a peaceful, natural death.

## Do I have a choice?

Yes. You have the right to make your own health care choices. It is up to you to decide whether or not antibiotics are right for you.

You should think about the times you will want to take antibiotics, and the times you will not.

Whatever you decide, talk first with your family and your doctor.

This information sheet was designed to give you a general description of antibiotics as a treatment choice near the end of life, some pros and cons of their use, and an outline of your options for choosing whether or not you want them to be a part of your Advance Care Plan.

***Antibiotics fight infection and may ease discomfort, but they will not cure a terminal illness.***

***If your illness cannot be cured by antibiotics, taking them may do more harm than good.***

***They may cause side effects or put you at risk for other illnesses, such as Clostridium difficile and yeast infections.***



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**GRACE**  
A Suncoast Hospice Affiliate

[www.projectgrace.org](http://www.projectgrace.org)

## 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 Project GRACE help me?

Project GRACE provides advance care planning services, free of charge, to anyone who wishes to communicate their future medical treatment decisions. The Project GRACE Advance Directive is used by many hospital systems across the country. It is acceptable to doctors and easily understood by the public. For more information, visit the Project GRACE website [www.projectgrace.org](http://www.projectgrace.org) or contact our office at 727-536-7364.

Project GRACE is an affiliate of the Suncoast Hospice and supported by grants, sponsorships and community donations through the Suncoast Hospice Foundation.

A gift to Project GRACE will help provide the people you care about the support and resources they need to make informed medical care decisions.

To make a donation, call 727.536.7364

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