

Urgent Care Clinic More Likely to Overprescribe Antibiotics

The newest offender in the antibiotic-resistant bacteria epidemic is urgent care centers, where 46 percent of people who entered with conditions that don't respond to antibiotics (viruses, etc...) left with a prescription anyway. That figure is significantly higher than emergency rooms (25 percent) and standard medical offices (17 percent). Those numbers are scary, as traffic to urgent care centers is on the rise and likely to increase as conventional healthcare becomes a luxury. Right now, urgent care centers and retail clinics account for 40 percent of all antibiotic prescriptions as well as a market share worth 26 billion dollars in the next 5 years.

Where the Numbers Come From

These numbers come from the 2014 Truven Health MarketScan Commercial Claims and Encounters Database and are from individuals under 65 with employer-sponsored health insurance. The database only accounts for those with insurance though. A survey from ten years ago found that uninsured patients at urgent care clinics account for 12 percent of all visitors. Since then, the number of customers at urgent facilities to has increased by more than 20 percent. If nothing changes, that figure will continue to rise. The number of unnecessary and inappropriate antibiotic prescribed will likely continue along with the number of visitors.

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Saying No

While many people know that doctors prescribe unnecessary antibiotics, not everyone knows how inappropriate some of those scripts are. These are a big deal. In the new era of antibiotic-resistant superbugs, this negligence is unacceptable.

Some conditions are more likely to be given an antibiotic prescription than others. Many of these are viruses or infections that attack the lungs, like viral upper respiratory infection, bronchitis/bronchiolitis, asthma/allergy, influenza, and viral pneumonia. Always do your own research, as this study makes it clear that even doctors are not always clearly informed as to what they are giving you.

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The Bottom Falls Out

Antibiotic-resistant bacteria will be one of the major causes of death by 2050 if something doesn't change. There are no new antibiotic breakthroughs on the horizon. The meat industry will be crippled without antibiotics, as it relies on those medications to make up for diseases that flourish in animals with poor quality food and living conditions. The changes to the medical industry will be as, if not more dramatic.

Every time you turn around, it feels like there is another, previously uninvestigated source of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. From the overuse of antibiotics in food animals, healthcare settings that serve as bacteria breeding grounds, a lack of new antibiotics, among other factors, this is a multi-faceted problem...and one that is here to stay.

That bell cannot be unrung.

Sources:

- *Comparison of Antibiotic Prescribing in Retail Clinics, Urgent Care Centers, Emergency Departments, and Traditional Ambulatory Care Settings in the United States* – JAMA Network
- *Urgent care centers often prescribe unnecessary antibiotics* – Reuters
- *Urgent care center market on track to hit \$26B by 2023* – Health Care Drive
- *Urgent care centers in the U.S.: Findings from a national survey* – NCBI
- *Even Proper Use of Antibiotics Results in the Emergence of Superbugs* – Mr. Said Blog
- *Patients are flocking to urgent-care clinics. Now hospitals are, too* – Modern Healthcare