

The Short on Antibiotic Shortages

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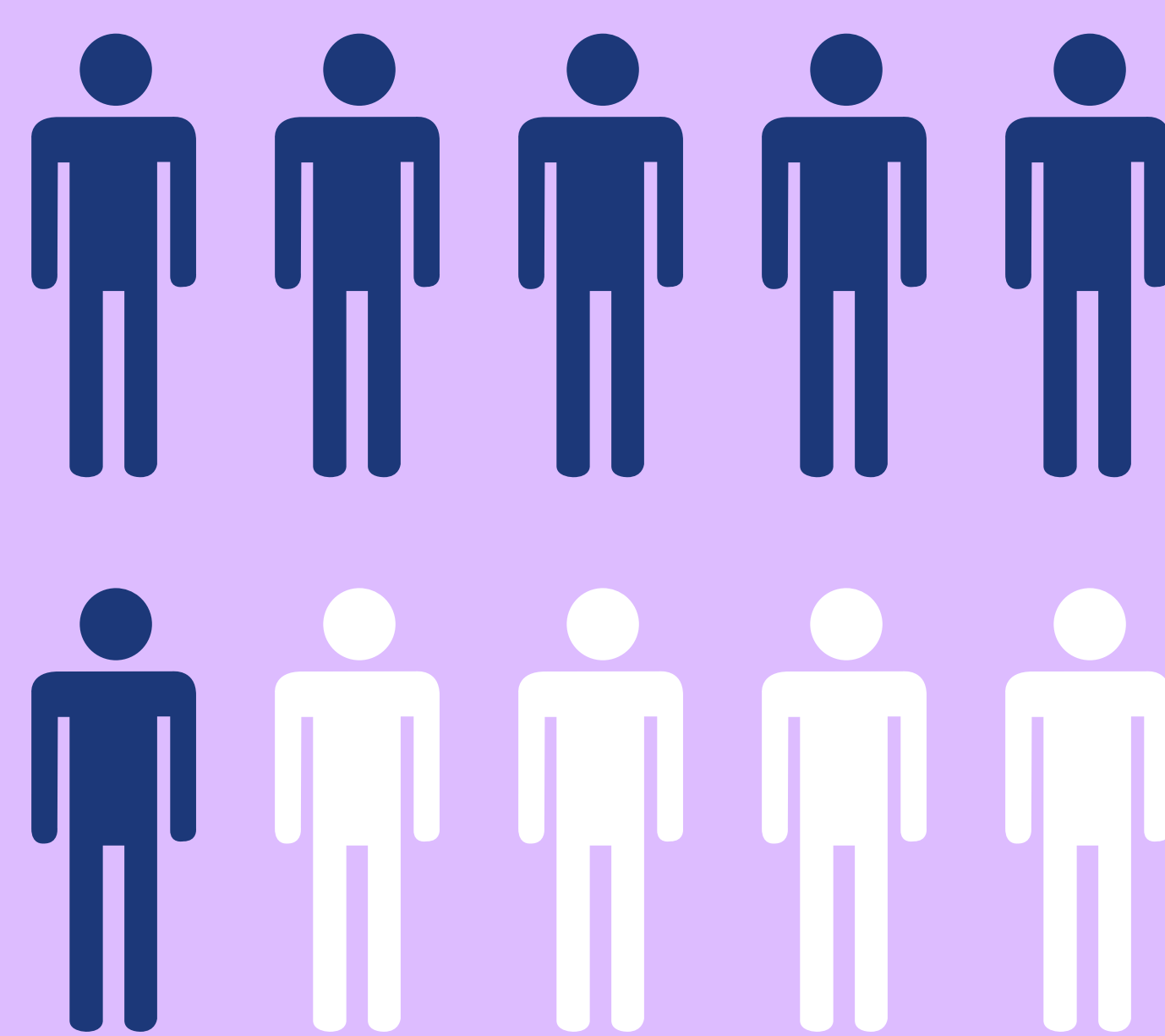
What are medication shortages and why do they occur?

Medication shortages occur when the **demand** for a medication **exceeds the available supply**.

This can be caused by a variety of issues including overuse, manufacturing issues, natural disasters or pandemics. The FDA publishes a list of current drug shortages located [here](#).

Antibiotics are one of the **most common** medication classes impacted by shortages.

Antibiotic shortages can have a significant impact on both patients, healthcare providers, and pharmacies.



Shortages of first-line antibiotics often require use of **alternative antibiotics** or **formulations** (ex. capsules instead of liquid).

Most alternatives are still effective, but may be more **costly**, have more **side effects**, or contribute to **bacterial resistance** because of unnecessarily broad bacterial coverage.

Pediatric patients may **struggle to take capsules or pills** which is challenging when suspensions or liquids are not available.

Real Life Example: The Amoxicillin Shortage

Amoxicillin is an antibiotic used to treat a common infections including **ear infections, pneumonia, and strep throat**.

A shortage of amoxicillin liquid is occurring due to **increased demand for the antibiotic** in the setting of spikes in respiratory infections. Patients and caregivers have **struggled to find the antibiotic stocked** in retail pharmacies.

What can I do to help?

As a patient/caregiver:

- For ear infections, consider watchful waiting if recommended by your prescriber
- Understand antibiotics are not effective against viruses, which are highly prevalent
- If prescribed an unfamiliar antibiotic, ask about how best to take it and what side effects to look out for

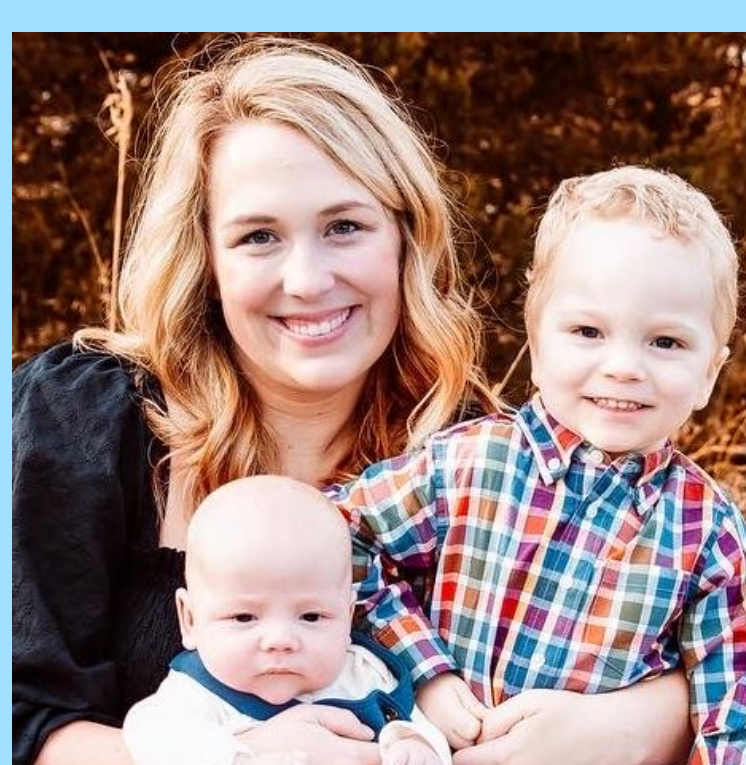
As a prescriber:

- Be aware of current shortages and ideal alternatives
- Use antibiotics only when necessary and for the shortest durations to improve current and prevent future shortages

All: Be patient with pharmacies during this busy time!



Click [Here](#) to Take a Short Quiz!



Author Dr. Annie Wirtz is the pharmacist director of the Antimicrobial Stewardship Program. She enjoys spending time with her boys, Charlie and Ollie, outside of work!