

# Proper Use of Antibiotics

## Protect Your Health



### What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are medicines that fight infections caused by bacteria. They do not work against viral infections like the flu or the common cold.

### Why is it important to use them correctly?

- **Incorrect use can cause resistance:** When antibiotics are used unnecessarily or instructions from the doctor are not followed, bacteria can become stronger and more difficult to treat.
- **It can affect your health and your family's health:** Antibiotic resistance means that common infections will be harder to cure in the future.
- **Risk of side effects:** Taking antibiotics without need can cause adverse reactions or allergies.

### When should you use antibiotics?

- **Antibiotics should be used only for bacterial infections** confirmed by a healthcare professional.
- **Antibiotics should *not* be used for the flu or common cold**, which are usually caused by viruses.

### What to do if you have access to antibiotics without a prescription?

- **Do not self-medicate.** Always consult a doctor or pharmacist before taking antibiotics.
- **Do not share antibiotics** with family or friends.
- **Do not save leftover antibiotics** to use later.

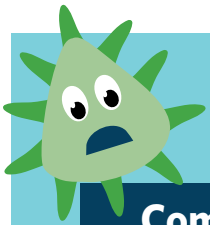
### What are some tips for the safe use of antibiotics?

- Follow your doctor's instructions; take them exactly as prescribed.
- Complete the entire course of treatment, even if you feel better before the prescription is finished.
- Do not insist on antibiotics if your doctor says you don't need them.

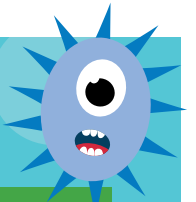
### How can I protect my health and my community?

- Responsible use of antibiotics helps keep these medicines effective for everyone.

To learn more about antibiotic prescriptions and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.



# Will antibiotics help?



Common Infection	Bacteria or Virus	Antibiotics Needed?
Strep throat	Bacteria	Yes
Urinary tract Infection	Bacteria	Yes
Abscess	Bacteria	Yes
Ear infection	Either	Maybe
Pneumonia	Either	Maybe
Common cold (runny nose, cough)	Virus	No
Sore throat not due to strep	Virus	No
Chest cold (bronchitis)	Virus	No
Bronchiolitis	Virus	No
Stomach flu	Virus	No

## Be Antibiotics Aware

Antibiotics save lives, but they aren't always the answer when you're sick.

1. Antibiotics are medicines that fight certain infections caused **by bacteria**. They do not work against viral infections like the flu or the common cold.
2. Taking antibiotics when you have a viral infection will not make you feel better.
3. Side effects can occur any time antibiotics are used. However, when you need antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects.
4. When antibiotics are used, they can lead to antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance occurs when germs like bacteria and fungi develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them.
5. If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. **Never save your antibiotics for later use or share them with family or friends.**
6. Stay healthy: clean hands, cover coughs, and get vaccinated, for the flu, for example.

## The Facts about Antibiotics:

- When a patient needs antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects or antibiotic resistance.
- When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could cause harm.
- Antibiotics do not work on viruses.
- Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.
- Taking antibiotics creates resistant bacteria. Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria no longer respond to the drugs designed to kill them.
- If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.
- Talk with your doctor if you have any questions about your antibiotics or if you develop any side effects.

To learn more about antibiotic prescriptions and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.

