



Use Antibiotics Wisely

Education for adult patients

Learn when an antibiotic is right for you

Antibiotics are medicines that attack bacteria that make you sick. **Antibiotics work only against bacteria.** **Antibiotics won't cure an illness caused by a virus** such as influenza, COVID or common colds or their symptoms such as coughs, and runny noses. If your illness is caused by Influenza or COVID, ask your doctor about antiviral medicines that will treat these viruses.

For colds, bronchitis, and most ear or sinus infections, the following ways can help you feel better:

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Eat healthy foods
- Use a vaporizer
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever or pain

What's got you sick?

Illness	Virus	Bacteria	Antibiotic needed?	Antiviral needed?
Cold	✓		No	No
Flu (Influenza)	✓		No	Yes, if confirmed by your doctor
COVID	✓		No	Yes, if confirmed by a COVID test
Bronchitis	✓		No	No
Runny Nose	✓		No	No
Ear Infection		✓	Sometimes	No
Sinus Infection		✓	Sometimes	No
Strep throat		✓	Yes: If confirmed by your doctor	No

If you are given an antibiotic, take your antibiotic the right way

Antibiotics need to be prescribed by a doctor. The doctor will explain how to take antibiotics correctly.

- **DON'T** share antibiotics with others including friends or family.
- **DON'T** take someone else's antibiotics.
- **DON'T** save antibiotics.

What happens when antibiotics are taken too often or for the wrong reasons?

- Taking antibiotics too often or "just in case" can cause the bacteria to change so much that the antibiotic might not work in the future when you really need it; this is called *antibiotic resistance*.
- If antibiotics stop working, then we will not be able to treat your infection.

To prevent infections, you can:



Keep up to date with recommended vaccines.



Stay home when sick.



Use your elbow when you cough or sneeze.



Clean your hands often to stop the spread of germs.

