

When antibiotics help?



Illness	Usual cause		Antibiotic needed?
	Virus	Bacteria	
Cold	●		No
Flu (influenza)	●		No
Chest Cold	●		No
Bronchitis	●		No
Green yellow runny nose	●		No
Middle ear infection		●	Sometimes
Strep throat		●	Yes
Sinus infection		●	Sometimes

Talk to your pharmacist or doctor about using antibiotics correctly and ways to stay healthy.

- Never use antibiotics for a cold or the flu. They don't work!
- Never share or take leftover antibiotics.
- Finish your antibiotic prescription even if you start to feel better.

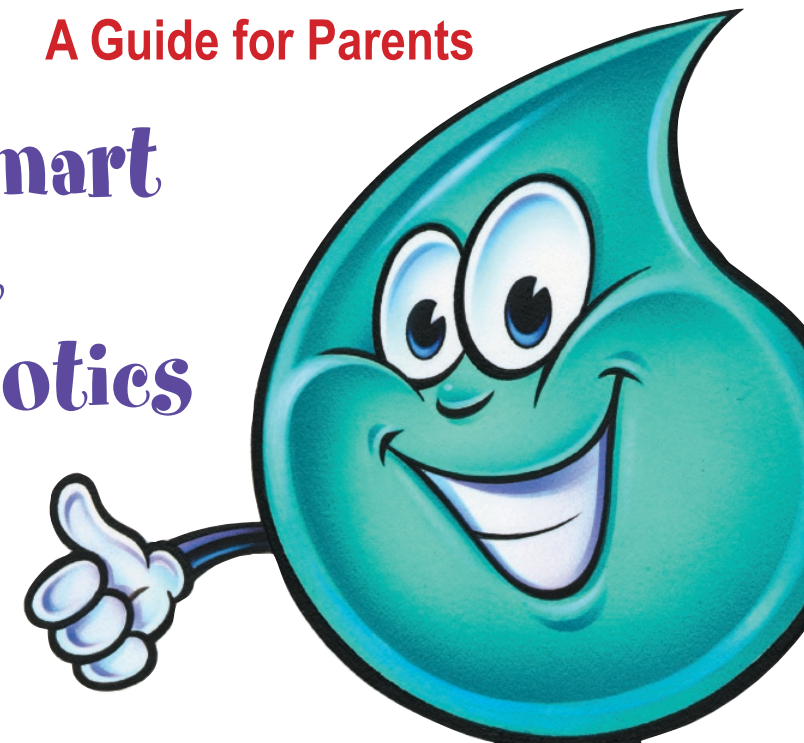
Take these simple steps to avoid getting the flu:

- Wash your hands often. This will help protect you and others against germs. When soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with a tissue. If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your sleeve, not your hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- If you are sick, stay home and away from other people as much as possible, to protect them from getting sick as well; get plenty of rest and check with your doctor.
- Get an annual flu shot.

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A Guide for Parents

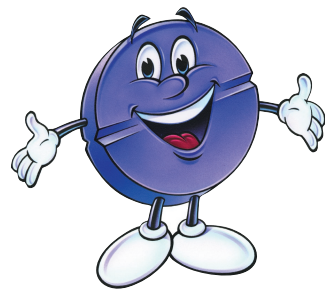
Get Smart About Antibiotics



COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
Public Health

www.publichealth.lacounty.gov

Antibiotics questions and answers



What kinds of germs make my child sick?

Two main kinds of germs—bacteria and viruses.

When can antibiotics help?

They can help cure bacterial infections, including middle ear infections, strep throat, and sinus infections. But keep in mind:

- Strep throat is the only kind of sore throat that can be helped by an antibiotic, and it must be diagnosed by a laboratory test.
- Sinus infections and colds have similar symptoms, but only sinus infections can be helped by antibiotics.

When won't antibiotics help?

When your child has a virus—especially colds and the yellow and green runny noses that come with them.

- Children usually don't need antibiotics for bronchitis or coughs.
- Most sore throats are caused by viruses and can't be cured by antibiotics.

Can antibiotics keep my child from getting a bacterial infection?

In most cases, no. In fact, taking antibiotics when they aren't needed can make them less effective if your child does need them in the future.

How do I know if my child needs antibiotics?

Only your doctor can tell for sure. Only give your child antibiotics if your doctor says your child has a bacterial infection and prescribes antibiotics. Make sure your child takes all of the medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even if your child starts to feel better.

What will make my child feel better when he/she has a cold or the flu?

- Resting
- Drinking plenty of fluids
- Taking acetaminophen or ibuprofen for fever or pain
- Eating healthy food
- Using a vaporizer

Ask your doctor or pharmacist for other suggestions to help your child feel better.

I've heard about "antibiotic resistance." What is it?

It's when some bacteria have figured out how to outsmart antibiotics. (They're called "antibiotic resistant.") A child who is sick with antibiotic-resistant bacteria may have to try different antibiotics before your doctor finds one that will work.

Is antibiotic resistance a problem?

Yes—and it's getting worse. Take, for example, the bacteria that causes many ear infections. It's resistant to penicillin up to 40% of the time! If the bacteria keep outsmarting the medicines we have, we may run out of ways to kill these germs. Remember to take antibiotics only when needed. This will keep them effective longer.

How can I protect my child from getting sick from antibiotic-resistant bacteria?

- Use antibiotics only when your doctor thinks they will work. Remember, antibiotics won't cure colds, coughs, runny noses and most sore throats. Talk with your doctor about what is causing the illness and what you can do to help your child get well.
- Make sure your child's immunizations (shots) are up-to-date. There are vaccines that can protect your child from getting certain types of illnesses.
- Help your children wash their hands often—after blowing their nose, using the toilet, and before eating. Good handwashing can cut down on the spread of germs and protect your children from getting sick.



“There's no excuse for overuse!”