

# Do You Need an Antibiotic?



## Antibiotics aren't always the answer.

If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Never save your antibiotics for later use or share them with family or friends.

Taking antibiotics only when needed helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations. Talk with your healthcare provider about your antibiotics, including how they could interact with other medications you are taking, or if you develop any side effects.

More than 2.8 million antibiotic-resistant infections occur in the United States each year, and more than 35,000 people die as a result.

## When do you need an antibiotic?

- **Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.** Antibiotics are critical tools for treating life-threatening conditions such as pneumonia and sepsis, which is the body's extreme response to an infection.
- **Antibiotics do not work on viruses**, such as those that cause colds, flu, bronchitis, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green. Antibiotics also won't help some common bacterial infections, including most cases of bronchitis, many sinus infections, and some ear infections.

## What is antibiotic resistance?

Any time you take antibiotics, they can cause side effects and contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance is one of the most urgent threats to the public's health.

- Antibiotic resistance does not mean the body is becoming resistant to antibiotics; it means bacteria are developing the ability to defeat the antibiotics designed to kill them.
- When bacteria become resistant, antibiotics cannot fight them, and the bacteria multiply.
- Some resistant bacteria can be harder to treat and spread to other people.

## References

- [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/pdfs/aaw/AU\\_Arent\\_Always\\_The\\_Answer\\_fs\\_508.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/community/pdfs/aaw/AU_Arent_Always_The_Answer_fs_508.pdf)
- [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/AntibioticsArentAlwaystheAnswer-H.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/AntibioticsArentAlwaystheAnswer-H.pdf)
- [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/VirusOrBacteria-Original-P.pdf](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/pdfs/VirusOrBacteria-Original-P.pdf)



# What Got You Sick?

Antibiotics are often prescribed when they are not needed for respiratory infections. Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria. Viral illnesses cannot be treated with antibiotics. When an antibiotic is not prescribed, ask your healthcare professional for tips on how to relieve symptoms and feel better.

Common Respiratory Infection	Common Cause			Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Virus	Virus OR Bacteria	Bacteria	
Common cold/ runny nose	✓			No
Sore throat (except strep)	✓			No
COVID-19	✓			No
Flu	✓			No
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)*		✓		No*
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Strep throat			✓	Yes
Whooping cough			✓	Yes

\*Studies show that otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help patients feel better.