

## How can my dentist help me *Be Antibiotics Aware*?

Your dentist plays an important role in your oral health. When you need antibiotics for an oral infection or prior to receiving dental work, it is important to take them exactly as prescribed. Your dentist can talk to you about when antibiotics are needed, what they do and do not treat, and why you should not share your antibiotics or save them for a future illness. Your dentist can tell you about possible side effects to watch for, such as *Clostridioides* (formerly *Clostridium*) *difficile* (also called *C. difficile*).

## When do I need antibiotics from my dentist?

Antibiotics are needed for treating certain oral infections caused by bacteria—especially if fever or swelling is present. Antibiotic prophylaxis—when antibiotics are prescribed as a precaution to prevent infection—is sometimes used before a patient gets dental work. Before having dental work done, talk to your dentist about any drug allergies or medical conditions.

## What is the right way to take antibiotics?

Your dentist can explain:

- What dose needs to be taken.
- At what times it should be taken.
- If it needs to be taken with food and water.

If your dentist prescribes an antibiotic, ask if it is recommended for your condition.



## How can I keep my mouth healthy?

You can keep your mouth healthy by:

- Brushing your teeth with fluoride toothpaste and flossing.
- Visiting your dentist regularly, even if you have no natural teeth or have dentures.
- Limiting alcoholic drinks.
- Drinking fluoridated water, especially if you have dry mouth.
- Not using any tobacco products or quitting smoking if you currently smoke.
- Managing chronic conditions.

Talk to your dentist about good oral hygiene and steps you can take to prevent infections.

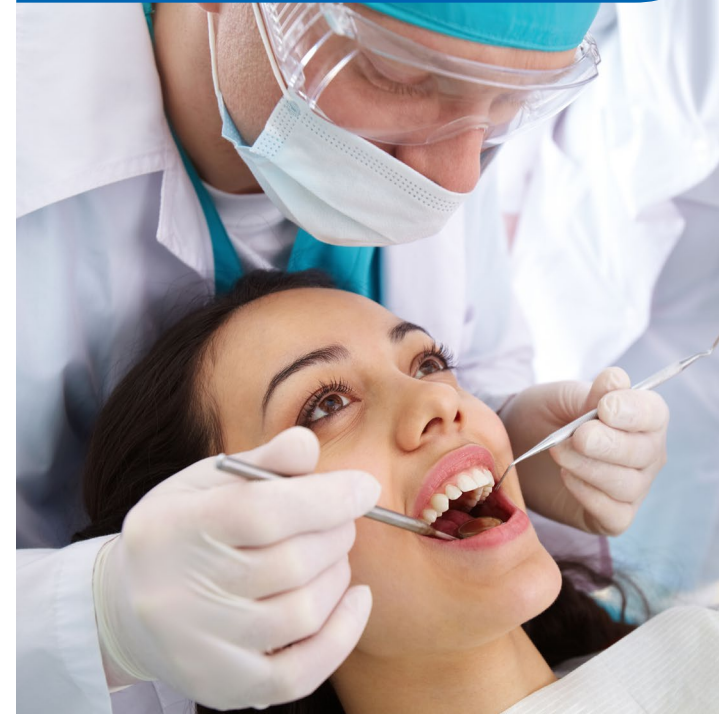
Improving the way dentists prescribe antibiotics, and the way we take antibiotics, helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.



To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use).



# Do You Need Antibiotics From Your Dentist?



**BE  
ANTIBIOTICS  
AWARE**

SMART USE, BEST CARE



## What don't antibiotics treat?

Antibiotics do not work for oral infections caused by viruses, cold sores, or fungal infections. They will also not cure a toothache. Your dentist must examine your mouth, determine what is causing the pain, and decide if antibiotics are appropriate for your dental problem.

## What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic resistance is one of the most urgent threats to the public's health. Any time antibiotics are used, they can lead to side effects and antibiotic resistance.

### Always remember:

- Antibiotic resistance does not mean the body is becoming resistant to antibiotics; it means bacteria have become resistant to 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 can spread to other people.

## What are the possible side effects of taking antibiotics?

Antibiotics save lives. When you need antibiotics, the benefits usually outweigh the risks of side effects or antibiotic resistance.

### Side effects from antibiotics can include:

- Rash
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Yeast infections

### More serious side effects include:

- *C. difficile* infection
- Life-threatening allergic reactions
- Interactions between antibiotics and other medications

**9.5% of all antibiotics prescribed in outpatient settings are prescribed by dentists. In 2016, that totaled 25.7 million antibiotic prescriptions.**

## When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could still hurt you.

Talk with your dentist if you have any questions about your antibiotics or if you develop any side effects, especially diarrhea, which could be a *C. difficile* infection. *C. difficile* can lead to severe colon damage and death and needs to be treated immediately.

Reactions from antibiotics cause one out of six medication-related visits to the emergency department.