

Antibiotics Aren't Always The Answer

CDC Urges Public To Be Antibiotics Aware

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages patients and families to Be Antibiotics Aware by learning about safe antibiotic use. Each year in the United States, at least 2 million people get infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. At least 23,000 die as a result.

Antibiotic resistance, one of the most urgent threats to the public's health, occurs when bacteria develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them.



When you get a prescription for antibiotics, follow your doctor's instructions carefully.

What Do Antibiotics Treat?

Antibiotics are critical tools for treating a number of common infections, such as pneumonia, and for life-threatening conditions including sepsis. Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.

What Don't Antibiotics Treat?

Antibiotics do not work on viruses, such as colds and flu, 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 Are The Side Effects of Antibiotics?

Any time antibiotics are used, they can cause side effects and lead to antibiotic resistance. When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could still hurt you. Common side effects range from things like rashes and yeast infections to severe health problems. More serious side effects include *Clostridium difficile* infection (also called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*), which causes diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage and death.

If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Patients and families can talk to their healthcare professional if they have any questions about their antibiotics, or if they develop side effects, especially diarrhea, since that could be *C. difficile*, which needs to be treated.



Regular hand-washing can go a long way toward protecting you from germs.

Can I Feel Better Without Antibiotics?

Patients and families can ask their healthcare professional about the best way to feel better while their body fights off the virus. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two without treatment.

How Can I Stay Healthy?

We can all stay healthy and keep others healthy by cleaning our hands, covering our coughs, staying home when sick, and getting recommended vaccines, for the flu, for example.

Antibiotics save lives. When a patient needs antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects and antibiotic resistance. Improving the way we take antibiotics helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that life-saving antibiotics will be available for future generations.

To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use.

