Many common infections are becoming resistant to antibiotics. As a parent, ask questions to make sure your sick child is getting the best care possible, which might not include an antibiotic.

The Facts:

• Antibiotics can have reactions and side effects.
  Harmful effects from antibiotics, such as side effects and allergic reactions, cause 1 out of 5 emergency department visits for adverse drug events and lead to 50,000 emergency department visits in children each year.¹

• Antibiotics can be overused and misused.
  It is estimated that more than half of antibiotics are unnecessarily prescribed to children in doctor office settings for cough and cold illness, most of which are caused by viruses.

• Antibiotics can only cure infections caused by bacteria, not viruses.

• Antibiotic resistance is growing.
  An estimated 2 million illnesses and 23,000 deaths occur each year in the United States due to antibiotic-resistant infections.² Overuse and misuse of antibiotics are main drivers of resistance.
Questions to Ask Your Provider
If your child is sick, here are 3 important questions to ask your healthcare professional:

1. **What is the best treatment for my child’s illness?**
   
   Antibiotics aren’t needed for common illnesses like colds, most sore throats, the flu, and even some ear infections. These illnesses are often caused by viruses, which do not respond to antibiotics. Sometimes the best treatment is symptom relief.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Usual Cause</th>
<th>Antibiotic Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cold/Runny Nose</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bronchitis/Chest Cold</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whooping Cough</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flu</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strep Throat</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sore Throat (except strep)</td>
<td>Virus</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fluid in the Middle Ear</td>
<td>Bacteria</td>
<td>NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urinary Tract Infection</td>
<td>Bacteria</td>
<td>YES</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. **Is this the right antibiotic for the type of infection my child has?**
   
   If an antibiotic will help your child, it’s important to use an antibiotic that is designed to fight the bacteria causing your child’s specific illness. If your healthcare professional says your child needs an antibiotic, ask if it’s the one most “targeted” to treat the infection while causing the least side effects.

3. **What can I do to help my child feel better?**
   
   Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best things to help your child feel better. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist what symptom relief is best for your child.

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**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**

For more information, please contact Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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**Citations:**
