

**Antibiotics are powerful medicines.**



**However, when not used wisely, they can be harmful to your health.**



If you have a viral illness like a cold or the flu, taking antibiotics may increase your risk of developing an antibiotic-resistant infection.

*Work with your doctor to find the best treatment for your illness.*

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**WARNING:**



**Unnecessary Antibiotics Can Be Harmful**

Talk with your doctor about antibiotic resistance.



## *Take antibiotics only when you really need them.*

Taking antibiotics when they're not needed helps **resistant bacteria** grow. When bacteria become resistant the antibiotics that once combatted them are no longer effective.

These resistant bacteria can stay in your body or spread to other people. They can cause severe illnesses that are difficult and expensive to treat.

Highly resistant bacteria ("superbugs") sometimes cause infections that can't be cured.

**Using antibiotics wisely** will help slow the spread of resistant bacteria. This will help keep our life-saving antibiotics effective for years to come.

## *Protect yourself against resistant bacteria!*

- ✔ **Never take antibiotics to treat viral illnesses like colds or the flu.** Antibiotics have no effect against viruses.
- ✔ When you are prescribed an antibiotic, take **every dose**, even if your symptoms go away. Taking part of the prescription only treats part of the infection.
- ✔ **Never share antibiotics.** These strong medications can cause dangerous side effects. They should only be used under a doctor's care.
- ✔ **Wash your hands** well and often. This is the best way to keep from getting sick.
- ✔ **Ask your doctor** about pneumococcal (pneumonia) and influenza (flu) vaccinations.

Two kinds of "bugs" can cause illness: **bacteria** and **viruses**.

Antibiotics kill bacteria. Illnesses caused by bacteria, like strep throat, can be treated with antibiotics.

Antibiotics have no effect against illnesses caused by viruses, like colds and the flu.

Illness	Usual cause		Antibiotics needed?
	Virus	Bacteria	
Colds and flu	●		No
Runny nose	●		No
Cough	●		No
Bronchitis	●		No
Sinus infection	●	●	Maybe
Ear infection	●	●	Maybe
Pneumonia	●	●	Usually
Strep throat		●	Yes

***Antibiotics won't help your body fight a cold or the flu.***