

Antibiotics... to take? or not to take?

Something is wrong. It could be a cough, sore throat, an ear ache, trouble breathing or a urinary tract infection. The goal is to feel better and be healthy again. And the answer seems obvious...take an antibiotic, the wonder drug, the magic pill.

But antibiotics may not always be the best way to get well.



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These drugs only treat bacterial infections. They aren't effective against viral infections. Using them for the wrong reason risks

increasing resistance. That means when antibiotics are **really** needed, they may **not** be effective.

It's about being sure you or your family receive the **right dose** of the **right antibiotic** for the **right amount of time**, and **ONLY** when truly necessary.

Antibiotics... do's... and don'ts...

Do's:

- Ask your healthcare provider if there are ways to relieve your symptoms without antibiotics, such as taking over-the-counter pain relievers or drinking more fluids.
- Avoid infections by washing your hands frequently and getting all recommended vaccines.
- Take the full prescription whenever you are prescribed antibiotics.

Don'ts:

- **Do Not Pressure** your healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics – ask how you can feel better without them.
- **Do Not Ask** to be tested for a urinary tract infection if you have no symptoms.
- **Do Not Take** an antibiotic for a viral infection. Antibiotics will NOT cure a cold, flu, most sore throats, most cough and bronchitis, or many sinus infections.

Antibiotics... what's the harm anyway?

Antibiotics are not harmless. They can lead to side effects including:

- Diarrhea (including developing deadly *C. difficile* diarrhea)
- Nausea and vomiting
- Vaginal yeast infections
- Allergic reactions
- Damage to nerves and tendons
- Antibiotic-resistant bacteria



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What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic use can lead to development of bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria are harder to kill and can cause untreatable infections. If those resistant bacteria cause an infection, it can require more complex treatment and even prolonged hospital stays.

Are antibiotics needed – stop, proceed with caution, or go?

Antibiotics **NOT NEEDED** to
treat these common illnesses

- Bronchitis
- Common cold
- Sore throat
- Viral lung infection
- Flu

Antibiotics **MAY BE NEEDED** to
treat these common illnesses

- Middle ear infection
- Sinus infection

Antibiotics **USUALLY NEEDED** to
treat these common illnesses

- Strep throat
- Whooping cough
- Bacterial lung infection
- Urinary tract infection

This information is provided to you by Nebraska Antimicrobial Stewardship Assessment and Promotion Program (ASAP) and Nebraska Infection Control Assessment and Promotion Program (ICAP).

Decisions about antibiotic treatment should be made during conversations with your healthcare provider. **Remember: Never pressure your healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics. There may be other ways to treat your symptoms.**

Content developed based on resources provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – retrieved June 2017 from <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/index.html>



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Antibiotics...

When should you take these infection fighting drugs?

Learn to protect yourself
and your community

