

Advice from FDA

Combating Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotics are a group of medicines used to treat infections caused by bacteria. For example, a doctor will prescribe antibiotics to treat a child with strep throat, which is caused by *Streptococcal* bacteria. Antibiotics do NOT work against diseases caused by viruses. Most sore throats, coughs, colds, and influenza (flu) cases are caused by viruses. Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses.

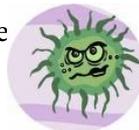
Using antibiotics against viral infections

- will not cure the infection
- will not keep other people from catching the virus
- will not help a person feel better
- may cause unnecessary, harmful side effects
- may cause less harmful bacteria in the body to grow stronger, leading to tougher germs that are resistant to antibiotics.

Misuse of antibiotics to treat viruses and overuse of antibiotics has led to a worldwide problem called “antibiotic resistance.” This resistance develops when harmful bacteria change in a way that makes antibiotics ineffective. Antibiotics once used to treat the disease no longer work against the bacteria. This also allows the bacteria to spread to other people more easily.

When antibiotics don't work, the result can be

- longer illnesses
- more complicated illnesses
- more doctor visits
- use of stronger and more expensive medicines
- more deaths caused by bacterial infections.



The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has been involved in promoting awareness about antibiotic resistance. The agency has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to promote the “*Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work*” program. It includes brochures, fact sheets, and other information to help people learn about preventing antibiotic-resistant infections.

You can learn more about the program at: www.cdc.gov/getsmart/.

Here's what you can do: If you are sick, see your doctor to get the right treatment. Remember, antibiotics should only be prescribed if your condition is believed to be caused by bacteria. Do not demand antibiotics if they are not needed. When antibiotics are prescribed, follow the tips in the **Check it out!** column to the right.

For more information, go to: www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/.

✓ **Check it out!**

Follow these tips to promote the proper use of antibiotics when prescribed.

1. Complete the full course of the medicine. It is important to take all of the medicine that was prescribed by your doctor, even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too soon, the medicine may not kill all the bacteria. You may become sick again and the remaining bacteria may become resistant to the antibiotic you have taken.

2. Do not skip doses. Antibiotics are most effective when they are taken regularly.

3. Do not save antibiotics. Different antibiotics are used to treat different infections. Taking the wrong medicine can delay getting the right treatment and may allow your condition to get worse.

4. Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. The antibiotic may not be the right one to treat your condition. Your symptoms may get worse.

5. Talk with your healthcare professional.

Ask questions, especially if you are uncertain about when an antibiotic is appropriate or how to take it.

Advice from FDA is a feature brought to you by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA). You can find this article and more on FDA's Consumer Health Information website at: www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/default.htm. This website features the latest updates on medicines and products regulated by the FDA. To receive this information, sign up for a free email subscription at: https://service.govdelivery.com/service/subscribe.html?code=USFDA_9.



FDA also provides web-based consumer videos on important medication safety topics. Here are a few examples:

Avoiding Drug Interactions
(www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182745.htm)

Fortify Your Knowledge About Vitamins
(www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182737.htm)

Avoiding Medication Mistakes
(www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm182942.htm)

Additional Resource:

Free customized medication safety alerts for consumers and caregivers. Details at: www.ConsumerMedSafety.org.

FDA Information taken from:

Safe Medicine

www.ismp.org

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**WHAT YOU
NEED TO KNOW
ABOUT
ANTIBIOTIC MEDICATION**

