

# Infection Prevention and You



## Get Smart: Your role in preventing antibiotic resistance

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that each year in the United States, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least 23,000 people die as a direct result of these infections. Here is important information about the appropriate use of antibiotics and antibiotic resistance. Learn more: [www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart).

### What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are life-saving drugs first used during World War II to treat bacterial infections. Before the discovery of these miracle drugs, many people became very ill or died as a result of bacterial infections that antibiotics now easily treat.

### What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotic resistance happens when bacteria change in a way that reduces or eliminates the effectiveness of antibiotics. As a result, stronger, more expensive antibiotics are needed to treat the same bacteria. People who develop antibiotic-resistant infections are more likely to need hospitalization and are at increased risk for death. Using antibiotics inappropriately contributes to the rise in antibiotic-resistant infections.

### If you don't finish a course of antibiotics, harmful superbugs can grow.

Take antibiotics *exactly* as your prescriber recommends:

- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you—do not share or use leftover antibiotics.
- Don't save antibiotics for the next illness. Antibiotics treat specific types of infections. Taking the wrong medicine may delay correct treatment and allow bacteria to multiply.
- Discard leftover medication once the prescribed treatment course is completed.
- Don't ask your healthcare provider for antibiotics when he/she says you don't need them.

### Know when antibiotics work—and when they don't.

Antibiotics work for bacterial infections, but they don't help you get over a viral infection. That means antibiotics will not help reduce symptoms caused by the common cold or the flu. Antibiotics are also often unnecessary for ear infections, sore throats, and sinus infections.

In the event that you do get a viral illness, that an antibiotic can't treat, your best option is to get plenty of rest, drink lots of water and other fluids, and treat the symptoms with hot tea (for a sore throat) and other home remedies. Consider using saline nasal sprays and other over-the-counter medicines as well.

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It all comes down to [knowing your ABC's of antibiotics](#) and asking the following questions to your healthcare provider:

1. "Do I really need an antibiotic?"
2. "Can I get better without this antibiotic?"
3. "What side effects or drug interactions can I expect?"
4. "What side effects should I report to you?"
5. "How do you know what kind of infection I have? I understand that antibiotics won't work for viral infections."

## Additional resources

CDC—Get Smart Know When Antibiotics Work <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/>

APIC—ABC's of Antibiotics infographic <http://consumers.site.apic.org/files/2014/09/AntibioticInfographic14-FINAL.pdf>

APIC (Infection Prevention and You)—Ask questions about your medications <http://consumers.site.apic.org/infection-prevention-in/healthcare-settings/ask-questions-about-your-medications/>

The White House—Executive order: Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

[https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/national\\_action\\_plan\\_for\\_combating\\_antibiotic-resistant\\_bacteria.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/national_action_plan_for_combating_antibiotic-resistant_bacteria.pdf)

## Download the new CDC Get Smart factsheets:

CDC—Antibiotics aren't always the answer (for parents) <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/week/downloads/antibiotics-arent-always-the-answer-for-parents.pdf>

CDC—Resistance anywhere is resistance everywhere <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/week/downloads/gsw-factsheet-global.pdf>

CDC—Antibiotic resistance: The global threat <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/week/downloads/antibiotic-resistance-the-global-threat.pdf>

CDC—Save money with antibiotic stewardship (for providers) <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/week/downloads/gsw-factsheet-cost.pdf>

CDC—Preserve the power of antibiotics (for providers) <http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/week/downloads/gsw-factsheet-providers.pdf>

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