

Antibiotic facts:

what I need to know?

Talk to your pharmacist about your cold, cough or flu before going to your doctor.

If your doctor thinks you have a bacterial infection and prescribes an antibiotic, be sure you finish taking them.

Never take antibiotics unless a doctor has prescribed them for you.

About 25,000 people will die in Europe every year because bacteria or infections are resistant to antibiotics.

Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can make bacteria develop a resistance.



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HSE

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HCU01123

Learn to recognise
and treat everyday
illnesses, yourself.



Antibiotics won't cure many illnesses
including coughs, flu, temperatures,
colds, or tummy aches.



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You have come to see your GP because you (or a family member) has an illness such as a cold, flu, earache or sore throat.

The doctor will discuss your symptoms with you and examine you thoroughly. The doctor will then decide whether or not you have symptoms of a viral or bacterial infection and discuss treatment options with you.

Will my doctor give me an antibiotic for my **cold, cough or flu?**

Many illnesses are caused by a virus, including most:

- **Colds**
- **Earaches**
- **Coughs**
- **Sore throats**
- **Flu**
- **Runny noses**
- **Conjunctivitis**
- **Rashes**
- **Temperature**
- **Tummy aches.**

Antibiotics do not work on viruses and will not make your temperature, tummy ache, cold, cough, flu or other illness like this better.

So the doctor should not give you an antibiotic prescription for these illnesses if they are caused by a virus.

What does an antibiotic do to me if I take it when **I don't need it?**

You run the risk of having a harmful side effect from taking an antibiotic. Annoying / irritating / troublesome but non serious side effects include a rash, upset stomach, nausea and diarrhoea. Antibiotics can have serious interactions with other drugs such as cholesterol-lowering medicine and contraceptive pills, so be sure to let the doctor know what other medicine you take regularly.

If you take antibiotics when you don't need them they can cause harm to you or your family and it can make bacteria resistant to them. This means that antibiotics may not work to make you better when you really need them for another bacterial illness like a:

- **Urine infection**
- **Kidney infection**
- **Persistent cough if you have chest problems**
- **Skin infection for example cellulitis**
- **Meningitis.**

If I get an antibiotic do I need to take them all?

If the doctor prescribes an antibiotic for you – make sure you take them exactly as prescribed. Even if you feel better after taking some of them, you need to take them all. If you don't, some bacteria may be left in your body and can become resistant to antibiotics. This means antibiotics may not work the next time you need them. Don't keep or use left-over antibiotics the next time you, your child, or any other family member is sick. Do not share antibiotics with anyone else.

Does the doctor always prescribe the same antibiotic?

Not always. The doctor may prescribe a different antibiotic to what you used before for the same type of infection.

There are many different antibiotics. Each one works on the different bacterial infections such as a chest or kidney infection. Doctors follow national guidelines when prescribing the best antibiotic to use for each different bacterial infection.

By using the correct antibiotic to cure your infection, it will be more effective, reduce side effects and will help bacteria not to become resistant to antibiotics.

