

# ANTIBIOTICS AREN'T ALWAYS THE ANSWER.



Antibiotics save lives. Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics, and the way we take antibiotics, helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.



**BE  
ANTIBIOTICS  
AWARE**

SMART USE, BEST CARE

## The Facts:

When a patient needs antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects or antibiotic resistance.

**When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could still hurt you.**

Common side effects of antibiotics can include rash, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, or yeast infections. More serious side effects include *Clostridium difficile* infection (also called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*), which causes diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage and death. People can also have severe and life-threatening allergic reactions.

**Antibiotics do not work on viruses**, such as colds and flu, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green.

**Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.** Antibiotics also won't help for some common bacterial infections including most cases of bronchitis, many sinus infections, and some ear infections.

**Taking antibiotics creates resistant**

**bacteria.** Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria no longer respond to the drugs designed to kill them.

Each year in the United States, at least **2 million** people get infected with antibiotic-resistant bacteria. At least **23,000** people die as a result.

**If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.**

Talk with your doctor if you have any questions about your antibiotics, or if you develop any side effects, especially diarrhea, since that could be a *C. difficile* (*C. diff*) infection which needs to be treated.

Reactions from antibiotics cause **1 out of 5** medication-related visits to the emergency department. In children, reactions from antibiotics are the most common cause of medication-related emergency department visits.



## Questions to Ask Your Healthcare Professional

If your child is sick, here are three important questions to ask your healthcare professional:

### 1. What is the best treatment for my child's illness?

Your child can feel better without an antibiotic. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two without treatment. Ask your healthcare professional about the best way to feel better while your child's body fights off the virus.

Common Condition	Common Cause			Are Antibiotics Needed?
	Bacteria	Bacteria or Virus	Virus	
Strep throat	✓			Yes
Whooping cough	✓			Yes
Urinary tract infection	✓			Yes
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)*		✓		No*
Common cold/runny nose			✓	No
Sore throat (except strep)			✓	No
Flu			✓	No

\* Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help you feel better.

### 2. What do I need to know about the antibiotics you're prescribing for my child today?

The antibiotic prescribed should be the one most targeted to treat the infection, while causing the least side effects. Some types of antibiotics, such as fluoroquinolones, have a stronger link to severe side effects such as life-threatening *C. diff* infections. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns healthcare professionals to only prescribe fluoroquinolones when another treatment option is unavailable. These powerful antibiotics are often prescribed even when they are not the recommended treatment.

### 3. What can I do to help my child feel better?

Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best ways to help your child feel better. Your healthcare professional can tell you how to help relieve your child's symptoms.

To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use).

