



Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer

Many common infections are becoming resistant to antibiotics. As a patient, ask questions to make sure you're the best care possible, which might not include an antibiotic.

The Facts:

- **Antibiotics can have reactions and side effects.**

Harmful effects from antibiotics, such as side effects and allergic reactions, cause **1 out of 5 emergency department** visits for adverse drug events

- **Antibiotics can be overused and misused.** It is estimated that **more than half of antibiotics are unnecessarily prescribed**

- **Antibiotics can only cure infections caused by bacteria, not viruses**

- **Antibiotic resistance is growing.**

An estimated **2 million illnesses** and **23,000 deaths** occur each year in the United States due to antibiotic-resistant infections. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics are main drivers of resistance

For more information, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website:

www.cdc.gov/getsmart

- **What is the best treatment for my illness?**

Illness	Usual Cause		Antibiotic Needed
	Virus	Bacteria	
Cold/Runny Nose	✓		No
Bronchitis/Chest Cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	✓		No
Chest Cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	✓		No
Whooping Cough		✓	Yes
Flu	✓		No
Strep Throat		✓	Yes
Sore Throat (except strep)	✓		No
Fluid in the Middle Ear	✓		No
Urinary Tract Infection		✓	Yes

- **Is this the right antibiotic for the type of infection I have?**

If an antibiotic will help you, it's important to use an antibiotic that is designed to fight the bacteria causing your specific illness.

If your healthcare professional says you need an antibiotic, ask if it's the one most "targeted" to treat the infection while causing the least side effects.