

ANTIBIOTIC ANSWERS

You're feeling sick and your over-the-counter medicine isn't doing the trick. So, you go to your doctor, and you're prescribed an antibiotic. But with talk of antibiotic resistance in the news, what do you really know about these medications?

What is an antibiotic? Antibiotics are a medicine made from an antimicrobial agent via a mold or bacterium that kills or slows growth of other bacteria. Common antibiotics include penicillin and streptomycin.

What do antibiotics help? Antibiotics treat certain infections caused by bacteria. These include strep throat, whooping cough and urinary tract infections, as well as some instances of sinus and middle ear infections. They don't, however, help with viruses, such as the flu or a cold.

What is antibiotic resistance? This resistance occurs when bacteria develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them. Each time you take antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant ones stay behind. Overuse of antibiotics leads to an increase in drug-resistant bacteria. Overusing and overprescribing of antibiotics threatens the usefulness of antibiotics.

How do I know if I need an antibiotic or not? If you have a virus, you don't need an antibiotic. Ask your doctor what else you can do to feel better while your body fights off the virus. Don't take antibiotics unless prescribed. That means if you have leftover medicines, don't reach for them when you're feeling sick. They likely won't help, and it would increase the risk of antibiotic resistance. The resistant bacteria that develop can be transmitted to other people, so you're not just putting yourself at risk.

How should I take antibiotics? Exactly as prescribed. Feeling better and still have pills left? Go ahead and finish them. The whole course is needed for the treatment. If you have any questions, talk to your doctor.

Do antibiotics have side effects? Common side effects include nausea, dizziness, diarrhea and yeast infections. Talk to your doctor if you experience any of these when taking antibiotics. Some people are also allergic to antibiotics.

How can I stay healthy? Avoiding illness is always a good goal. When you're feeling good, take precaution. Wash your hands regularly. Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze. Get vaccinated. And if you do get sick, stay home to avoid spreading the sickness.

Visit <https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/week/get-involved.html> to see how you can get involved in combating antibiotic resistance and spreading awareness to make our country healthier. Use the hashtag #BeAntibioticsAware to spread the word!



STUDIES SHOW
that at least 30% of antibiotic courses prescribed in an outpatient setting are unnecessary, meaning the antibiotic wasn't actually needed to treat the illness.