

Antibiotic resistance is a growing problem in the U.S. When bacteria resist the effects of an antibiotic, they survive and continue to multiply, causing more harm.

Taking antibiotics when you have a virus can be dangerous. They can increase your risk of getting an antibiotic-resistant infection later, kill healthy bacteria, and cause harmful side effects.

Antibiotics can cause side effects. Common side effects can include: rash, nausea, diarrhea, and yeast infections. Serious side effects can include: C. diff infection, life-threatening allergic reactions, and antibiotic-resistant infections.

Misuse of antibiotics happens when a person is prescribed the wrong antibiotic, the wrong dose of an antibiotic, or an antibiotic for the wrong length of time. Talk with your doctor about the best treatment for your illness.



Viruses or Bacteria What's got you sick?

Condition	V/B/Both	Antibiotic
Strep throat	B	Yes
Whooping cough	B	Yes
Urinary tract infection	B	Yes
Sinus infection	Both	Maybe
Middle ear infection	Both	Maybe
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	Both	No*
Common cold/ runny nose	V	No
Sore throat (except strep)	V	No
Flu	V	No

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

Antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections, not viruses. That means they won't cure the common cold or help a runny nose.

What **DO** antibiotics treat?

Antibiotics **ONLY** treat certain infections caused by bacteria, such as:

- Strep throat
- Whooping cough
- Urinary tract infection (UTI)

Antibiotics are also needed to treat life-threatening conditions caused by bacteria, such as sepsis.

What **DON'T** antibiotics treat?

Antibiotics **DO NOT** work on viruses, such as those that cause:

- Colds and runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green
- Most sore throats (except strep throat)
- Flu
- Most chest colds



**Indiana Patient
Safety Center**

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