

Get Smart About Antibiotics

Why are we concerned about antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotics are medicines used to treat bacterial illnesses. In some cases, over time bacteria can develop resistance to an antibiotic. This makes infections hard to treat and can mean longer lasting illnesses, more doctor visits, hospitalizations, and the need for stronger and more expensive antibiotic treatments.



Why are bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics?

Antibiotics target bacteria, not viruses. If antibiotics are used too often for things they can't treat (like colds and the flu), they are less effective and may stop working. Drug-resistant bacteria develop because good bacteria are killed but resistant bacteria are left to grow and multiply.

How can I help prevent antibiotic-resistant infections?

- **Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed.** Take the full amount and do not stop because you feel better.
- **Know when to use antibiotics.** Do not expect to take them every time you get sick.
- **Do not ask your doctor for antibiotics if you have a viral illness** (like colds, flu, stomach virus, etc.). Ask about ways to relieve your symptoms instead.
- **Do not take antibiotics without a prescription.** Leftover medicine may not be the right one for your current illness and you probably won't have enough to kill the germs.
- **Prevent the spread of germs and get recommended vaccinations.** Wash hands thoroughly, with soap and warm water, especially after changing diapers, using the toilet, or handling raw meat or poultry.

For more information: www.cdc.gov/getsmart



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