

# Antibiotics are not always the answer!

Most cough and cold illnesses are caused by viruses. Antibiotic use can only cure bacterial illnesses—not viral illnesses.

## VIRUSES CAUSE COMMON ILLNESSES LIKE:

- Colds
- Influenza (the flu)
- Runny noses
- Most coughs
- Most bronchitis
- Most sore throats
- Most sinus infections
- Some ear infections



Viral illnesses, like colds, usually go away without treatment in a week or two. Even many bacterial ear infections go away by themselves. When an antibiotic is not prescribed, ask your child's doctor or pharmacist what can be used to relieve symptoms.

## Taking antibiotics for viral illnesses:

- Will **NOT** cure you or your child's illness
- Will **NOT** help you or your child feel better
- Will **NOT** keep others from catching your or your child's illness

\* National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. Division of Bacterial Diseases. Get Smart symptom relief tips & tools for you or your child at: [www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart) or call 1-800CDC-INFO (232-4636)

## Antibiotics are life-saving drugs

Using antibiotics wisely is the best way to preserve their strength for future bacterial illnesses.

## Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections

If your child has a viral infection like a cold, talk to a doctor or pharmacist about symptom relief. This may include over-the-counter medicine, a humidifier, or warm liquids.

## Some ear infections DO NOT require an antibiotic

A doctor can determine what kind of ear infection your child has and if antibiotics will help. The doctor may follow expert guidelines to wait a couple of days before prescribing antibiotics since your child may get better without them.

## Most sore throats DO NOT require an antibiotic

Only 1 in 5 children seen by a doctor for a sore throat has strep throat, which should be treated with an antibiotic. Your child's doctor can only confirm strep throat by running a test.

## Green colored mucus is NOT a sign that an antibiotics is needed

As the body's immune system fights off an infection, mucus can change color. This is normal and does not mean your child needs an antibiotic.

## There are potential risks when taking any prescription drug

Antibiotic use can cause complications, ranging from an upset stomach to a serious allergic reaction. Your child's doctor will weigh the risks and benefits before prescribing an antibiotic.

**Talk to a doctor anytime, anywhere!**

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