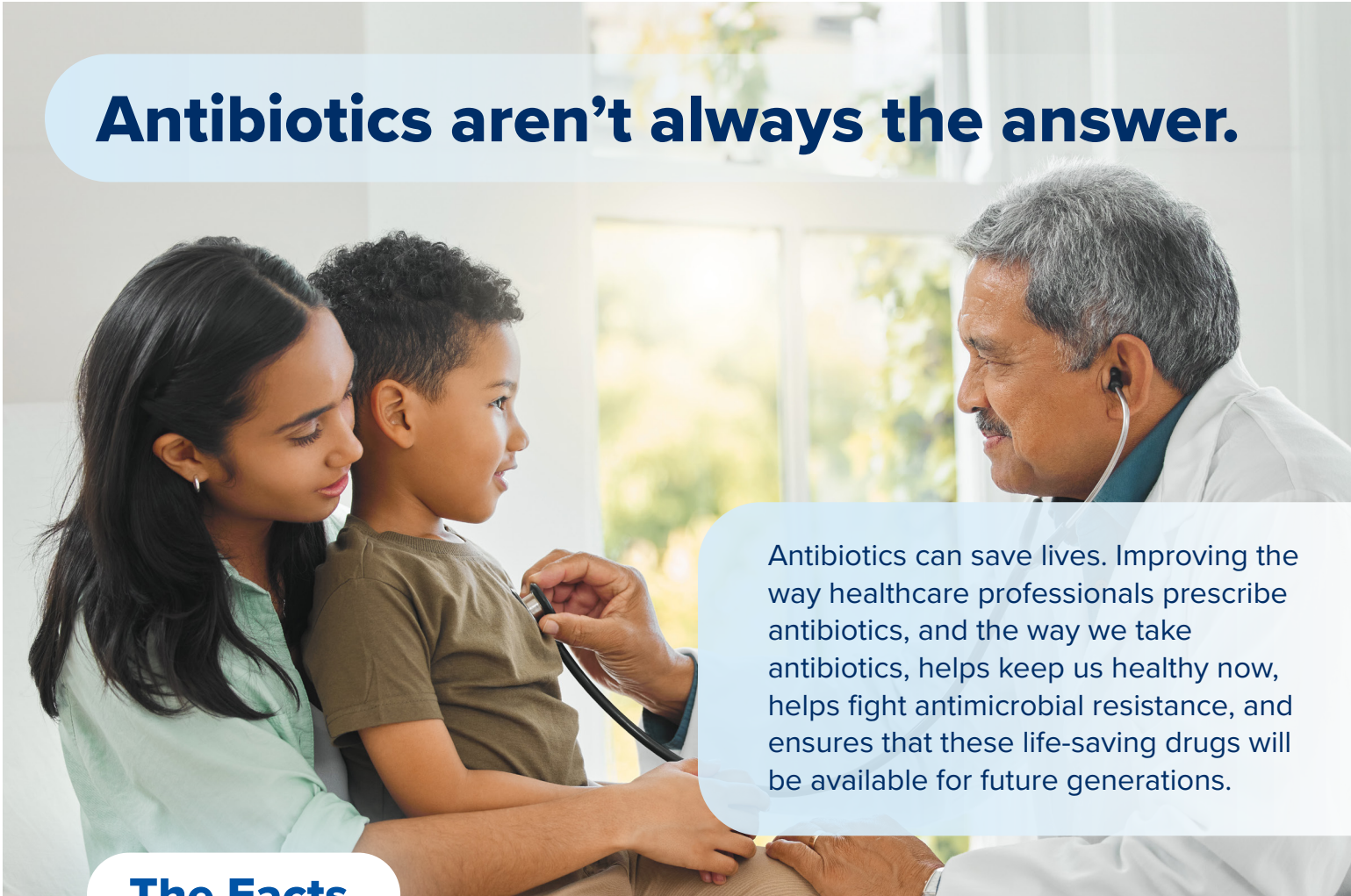


Antibiotics aren't always the answer.



Antibiotics can save lives. Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics, and the way we take antibiotics, helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antimicrobial resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.

The Facts

When a patient needs antibiotics, the benefits outweigh the risks of side effects and antimicrobial resistance.

When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could still cause harm. Common side effects of antibiotics can include rash, dizziness, nausea, diarrhea, or yeast infections. More serious side effects include *Clostridioides difficile* infection (also called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*), which causes diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage and death. People can also have severe and life-threatening allergic reactions.

Antibiotics do not work on viruses, such as colds and flu, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green.

Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics also won't help for some common bacterial infections including most cases of bronchitis, many sinus infections, and some ear infections.

Taking antibiotics creates resistant bacteria.

Antimicrobial resistance occurs when bacteria no longer respond to the drugs designed to kill them.

More than 2.8 million antimicrobial-resistant infections occur in the United States each year, and **more than 35,000** people die as a result.

If you need antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed. Talk with a healthcare professional if you have any questions about your antibiotics, or if you develop any side effects, especially diarrhea, since that could be a *C. difficile* (*C. diff*) infection which needs to be treated.

Reactions from antibiotics cause **1 out of 5** medication-related visits to the emergency department. In children, reactions from antibiotics are the most common cause of medication-related emergency department visits.

Questions to ask a Healthcare Professional

Q What is the best treatment for my child's illness?

Your child can feel better without an antibiotic. Respiratory viruses usually go away in a week or two. Ask a healthcare professional about the best way to feel better while your child's body fights off the virus.

COMMON RESPIRATORY INFECTIONS	COMMON CAUSE			ARE ANTIBIOTICS NEEDED?*
	VIRUS	VIRUS OR BACTERIA	BACTERIA	
Common cold/runny nose	✓			No
Sore throat (except strep)	✓			No
COVID-19	✓			No
Flu	✓			No
Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)		✓		No**
Middle ear infection		✓		Maybe
Sinus infection		✓		Maybe
Strep throat			✓	Yes
Whooping cough			✓	Yes

*Antiviral drugs are available for some viral infections, such as COVID-19 or flu.

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

Q What do I need to know about the antibiotics you're prescribing for my child today?

The antibiotic prescribed should be the one most targeted to treat the infection, while causing the least side effects. Some types of antibiotics, such as fluoroquinolones, have a stronger link to severe side effects such as life-threatening *C. diff* infections. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) warns healthcare professionals to only prescribe fluoroquinolones when another treatment option is unavailable. These powerful antibiotics are often prescribed even when they are not the recommended treatment.

Q What can I do to help my child feel better?

Pain relievers, fever reducers, saline nasal spray or drops, warm compresses, liquids, and rest may be the best ways to help your child feel better. A healthcare professional can tell you how to help relieve your child's symptoms.



Learn more at
cdc.gov/antibiotic-use



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