

What are possible side effects of taking antibiotics?

Anytime antibiotics are used, they can cause side effects. Common side effects range from minor to very severe health problems and can include:



Rash



Dizziness



Nausea



Yeast Infection



Diarrhea

Get immediate help if your child experiences:

- Severe diarrhea, which could be a symptom of *C. diff* infection, and can lead to severe colon damage and death.
- Severe and life-threatening allergic reactions, such as wheezing, hives, shortness of breath, and anaphylaxis (which is a feeling that your child's throat is closing or choking, or their voice is changing).

Taking antibiotics can create resistant bacteria. Antimicrobial resistance happens when germs like bacteria and fungi develop the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them.

When antibiotics are not needed, they won't help your child get better and can still cause side effects.

How can you *Be Antibiotics Aware*?

- Talk to a healthcare professional about when antibiotics are and are not needed for your child's illness.
- Follow their recommendations about the best treatment for your child's illness.
- Contact a healthcare professional immediately if your child experiences any side effects or allergic reactions while taking an antibiotic.



Improving the way we take antibiotics helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antimicrobial resistance, and ensures that these life-saving antibiotics will be available for future generations.

To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.



Accessible Link:
<https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/about>

Know When Antibiotics Work

Antibiotic treatment information for families with young children



**BE
ANTIBIOTICS
AWARE**
SMART USE, BEST CARE

Antibiotics do NOT work against viruses that cause respiratory infections such as flu, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV).

- Antibiotics don’t treat runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green.

Antibiotics are only needed to treat certain infections caused by bacteria like strep throat, whooping cough, and urinary tract infections.

- Some bacterial infections, such as many sinus infections and some ear infections, can get better without antibiotics.

A healthcare professional may consider **“watchful waiting”** or **“delayed prescribing”** instead of immediately prescribing an antibiotic for your child’s illness.

Two out of three children with mild ear infections get better without antibiotics.

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		✓		Sometimes
Sinus infection		✓		Sometimes
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 you feel better.

What is “watchful waiting?”

- “Watchful waiting” for mild ear infections means observing your child for 2-3 days to give their immune system time to fight off an ear infection rather than starting antibiotics immediately.
- A healthcare professional will wait and see if your child gets better before prescribing an antibiotic.

What is “delayed prescribing?”

- “Delayed prescribing” is an approach used in children with respiratory infections where a healthcare professional believes that their illness may resolve on its own.
- A healthcare professional may give you an antibiotic prescription and instruct you to fill it if your child's symptoms do not improve or worsen within a certain time.