GET SMART…

- Antibiotics are strong medicines, but they don't cure everything.
- When not used correctly, antibiotics can actually be harmful to your health.
- Antibiotics can cure most bacterial infections. Antibiotics cannot cure viral illnesses.
- Antibiotics kill bacteria – not viruses.
- When you are sick, antibiotics are not always the answer.

USE ANTIBIOTICS WISELY

Talk with your healthcare provider about the right medicines for your health.

Distributed by
Los Angeles County Department of Public Health

For more information, see the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at:
www.cdc.gov/getsmart or call 1-800-CDC-INFO

GET SMART
Know When Antibiotics Work

Cold or Flu. Antibiotics Don't Work for You.

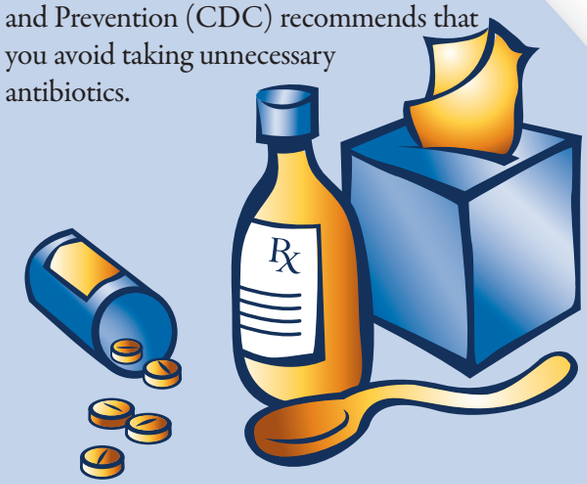
When you feel sick, you want to feel better fast. But antibiotics aren't the answer for every illness. This brochure can help you know when antibiotics work – and when they won't. For more information, talk to your healthcare provider or visit www.cdc.gov/getsmart.

The Risk: Bacteria Become Resistant

What's the harm in taking antibiotics anytime? Using antibiotics when they are not needed causes some bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic.

These resistant bacteria are stronger and harder to kill. They can stay in your body and can cause severe illnesses that cannot be cured with antibiotics. A cure for resistant bacteria may require stronger treatment – and possibly a stay in the hospital.

To avoid the threat of antibiotic-resistant infections, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that you avoid taking unnecessary antibiotics.



Antibiotics Aren't Always the Answer

Most illnesses are caused by two kinds of germs: bacteria or viruses. Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections – not viral infections.

Bacteria cause strep throat, some pneumonia and sinus infections. *Antibiotics can work.*

Viruses cause the common cold, most coughs and the flu. *Antibiotics don't work.*

Using antibiotics for a virus:

- **Will NOT cure the infection**
- **Will NOT help you feel better**
- **Will NOT keep others from catching your illness**

Protect Yourself With the Best Care

You should not use antibiotics to treat the common cold or the flu.

If antibiotics are prescribed for you to treat a bacterial infection – such as strep throat – be sure to take all of the medicine. Only using part of the prescription means that only part of the infection has been treated. Not finishing the medicine can cause resistant bacteria to develop.

Talk to Your Healthcare Provider to Learn More

Commonly Asked Questions:

How Do I Know if I Have a Viral or Bacterial Infection?

Ask your healthcare provider and follow his or her advice on what to do about your illness.

Remember, colds are caused by viruses and should not be treated with antibiotics.

Won't an Antibiotic Help Me Feel Better Quicker so That I Can Get Back to Work When I Get a Cold or the Flu?

No, antibiotics do nothing to help a viral illness. They will not help you feel better sooner. Ask your healthcare provider what other treatments are available to treat your symptoms.

If Mucus from the Nose Changes from Clear to Yellow or Green — Does This Mean I Need an Antibiotic?

No. Yellow or green mucus does not mean that you have a bacterial infection. It is normal for mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.