

Do I Need *Antibiotics?*

“As healthcare providers, we promise to treat your illness in the best way possible. We will not prescribe antibiotics to you when they are likely to do more harm than good.”

Illness can be caused by bacteria or viruses.

- Antibiotics can only treat illnesses that are caused by bacteria.
- Illnesses caused by a virus cannot be treated with antibiotics. When an antibiotic is not given, ask your doctor for tips on how to treat symptoms and feel better.

Illness	Usual cause		Antibiotic needed
	Virus	Bacteria	
Cold / Runny Nose	X		NO
Bronchitis/Chest Cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)	X		NO
Whooping Cough		X	Yes
Flu	X		NO
Strep Throat		X	Yes
Sore Throat (except strep)	X		NO
Fluid in the Middle Ear (otitis media with effusion)	X		NO
Urinary Tract Infection with symptoms (such as fever, pain or more frequent urination)		X	Yes

Why should I be concerned about antibiotic use?

Antibiotics are powerful drugs. When you take antibiotics you increase your risk of:

- Clostridium difficile (“C-diff”) infections.
- Antibiotic-resistant infections.
- Side effects.

Taking antibiotics

Your doctor will carefully consider if antibiotics are needed to treat your illness. You should take antibiotics only when needed. Follow your doctor’s direction for when and how long to take antibiotics. This helps prevent antibiotic resistance.

To learn more go to www.cdc.gov/getsmart.