

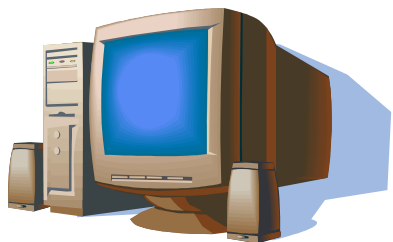
## Resources

Antibiotics will not fight viruses that cause colds and flu. If you have a cold or the flu, fluids and plenty of rest are best.

Talk to your healthcare provider to find out if antibiotics will work for you.

Information about antibiotic resistance was collected from the Centers of Disease Control's (CDC), "Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work Campaign."

For more information, please call 1-800-CDC-INFO or visit [www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart)



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Articles in this newsletter are not a substitute for the care and advice of medical professionals. When you have a question or need medical advice, diagnosis or treatment, consult your physician.

This newsletter is produced by Inova Health System in conjunction with your faith community. If you prefer not to receive this newsletter, please notify the appropriate personnel in your faith community.

Inova Health System is a not-for-profit health care system based in Northern Virginia that consists of hospitals and other health services including emergency and urgent care centers, home care, nursing homes, mental health, blood donor services, and wellness classes. Governed by a voluntary board of community members, Inova's mission is to improve the health of the diverse community we serve through excellence in patient care, education and research.

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January

2009

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# For Your Health

## Sniff, Sniff, Sniff

### Understanding Antibiotics

Antibiotics, also known as antimicrobial drugs, are drugs that fight infections caused by bacteria. Alexander Fleming discovered the first antibiotic, penicillin, in 1927. Now there are over 100 different antibiotics available to doctors to cure minor illnesses as well as life-threatening infections.

Antibiotic resistance has been noted as one of the world's most concerning health problems.

When people have common infections that once were easily treatable with antibiotics, the problems can be very serious.

If a person develops a resistance to antibiotics, often the illnesses stay around longer. Many more doctor visits or extended hospital stays may be needed to treat the patient. And some very resistant infections may need more expensive and toxic medications. Some resistant infections can cause death.

Sick individuals aren't the only people who can suffer. Families and entire communities feel the impact when disease-causing germs become resistant to antibiotics.

These antibiotic-resistant bacteria can quickly spread to family members, schoolmates and co-workers. When antibiotics no longer work, an entire community could become threatened with a new strain of infectious disease that is more difficult to cure and more expensive to treat.

## Is it a Virus or a Cold?

Did you know that colds, flu, most sore throats, and bronchitis are caused by viruses? Antibiotics do not help fight viruses. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed increases your risk of getting an infection later that resists antibiotic treatment.

Antibiotics kill bacteria, not viruses such as:

- Colds or flu
- Most coughs and bronchitis
- Sore throats not caused by strep
- Runny noses

Taking antibiotics for viral infections, such as a cold, cough, the flu, or most bronchitis, will NOT:

- Cure the infections
- Keep other individuals from catching the illness
- Help you feel better

## Common Side Effects of Antibiotics

Some of the more common side effects may include mild stomach upset or pain, soft stools or diarrhea. You should notify your doctor if you have any of the following side effects:

- Vomiting
- Severe watery diarrhea and abdominal cramps
- Allergic reaction (shortness of breath, hives, swelling of your lips, face, or tongue, fainting)
- Vaginal itching or discharge
- White patches on your tongue

## What to Do?

Talk with your healthcare provider about antibiotic resistance.

### What To Do

- Take it exactly as the doctor tells you. Complete the prescribed course even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too early, some bacteria may survive and re-infect you.
- Make sure your children take all medication as prescribed, even if they feel better.
- Throw away any leftover medication once you have completed your prescription

### What Not To Do

- Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold, a cough, or the flu.
- Do not demand antibiotics when a doctor says they are not needed.
- They will not help treat your infection.



### When You Are Prescribed An Antibiotic,

- Do not skip doses.
- Do not save any antibiotics for the next time you get sick
- Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. The antibiotic may not be appropriate for your illness. Taking the wrong medicine may delay correct treatment and allow bacteria to multiply.