

# How to Use Antibiotics Wisely

Read the tips below to learn how you can use antibiotics the right way.

## Tip #1:

### Know about different germs.

Different germs can make us sick. Most diseases are caused by germs called bacteria or viruses. Only some germs can be killed with medicine.

## Tip #2:

### Learn what medicine is right for you.

The same medicine can't be used for all germs. Antibiotics are medicine that kills bacteria but has no effect on viruses. Your doctor can tell you what medicine is right for you or your child.

## Tip #3:

### Take your medicine the right way.

Antibiotics need to be prescribed by a doctor. The doctor will explain how to take antibiotics correctly. Take all of the medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even if you or your child starts to feel better. Never share your prescribed medicine with friends or family.

## What germs usually cause these diseases...?

Illness	Virus	Bacteria	Antibiotic Needed?
Cold	✓		No
Flu (Influenza)	✓		No
Chest Cold	✓		No
Bronchitis	✓		No
Runny Nose	✓		No
Middle Ear Infection		✓	Sometimes
Sinus Infection		✓	Sometimes
Strep Throat		✓	Yes: If confirmed by your doctor.

## Need more information?

County of Los Angeles,  
Department of Public Health  
[www.publichealth.lacounty.gov](http://www.publichealth.lacounty.gov)

California Department of Public Health  
<http://www.cdph.ca.gov/Pages/NR10-090.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart/index.html>



# Using Antibiotics Wisely

A guide for parents and caregivers.



## Learn more about the tips

How much do you know about using antibiotics the right way? Learn more about the three tips that will help you use this medicine correctly.

### Tip #1:

#### **Know about different germs.**

Different germs can make us sick. Most diseases are caused by germs called bacteria or viruses. Bacteria can cause infections like strep throat. Viruses can cause things like the flu. Only some germs can be killed with medicine.

### Tip #2:

#### **Learn what medicine is right for you.**

The same medicine can't be used for all germs. Antibiotics are medicine that can help cure bacterial infections, such as some middle ear and sinus infections. Your doctor can tell you what medicine is right for you or your child.

Antibiotics won't prevent or cure the flu, colds, coughs, runny noses, and most sore throats. There are things you can do to help your child feel better when they feel sick.

Your child will feel better if you help them...

- Rest
- Drink plenty of fluids
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil) for fever or pain
- Eat healthy foods
- Use a vaporizer

### Tip #3:

#### **Take your medicine the right way.**

Antibiotics need to be prescribed by a doctor. The doctor will explain how to take antibiotics correctly. Take all of the medicine as prescribed by your doctor, even if you or your child starts to feel better. Never share your prescribed medicine with friends or family. Never take someone's leftover medicine.

Taking antibiotics the wrong way helps bacteria grow stronger. Sometimes they get so strong that the germs develop antibiotic resistance. This means the medicine doesn't work on these germs anymore. If the bacteria keep outsmarting the medicines we have, we may run out of ways to kill these germs. That's why we must take antibiotics only when needed.

## The best ways to stay healthy are to...

- Make sure your child's and your immunizations are up-to-date. Vaccines, like the annual flu shot, can protect your child.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick. If you're sick, stay home and away from others as much as possible.
- Use your sleeve, not your hands, when you cough or sneeze.
- Help your children wash their hands often. Good hand washing helps stop the spread of germs. Teach them to follow these steps:
  1. Rub hands together to make bubbles
  2. Sing the ABCs or Happy Birthday
  3. Use warm water and soap
  4. Use clean towels to dry our hands

