



Antibiotics And Your Dentist— CDC Urges You To *Be Antibiotics Aware*

(NAPSA)—The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) encourages the public to *Be Antibiotics Aware* by talking with their dentists about when antibiotics are needed for their oral health. While antibiotics have a role to play, they should only be used when needed. Any time antibiotics are used, they can cause side effects and lead to antibiotic resistance.

Dentists Can Help You *Be Antibiotics Aware*

Your dentist will tell you if you need antibiotics for an oral infection or before you have dental work. It is important to take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. Your dentist can talk to you about when antibiotics are needed, what they do and do not treat, and why you should not share your antibiotics or save them for a future illness.

Understanding Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotic resistance is one of the most urgent threats to the public's health. Always remember:

- Antibiotic resistance does not mean the body is becoming resistant to antibiotics; it means bacteria have developed the ability to defeat the antibiotics designed to kill them.
- When bacteria become resistant, antibiotics cannot fight them, and the bacteria multiply.
- Some resistant bacteria can be harder to treat and can spread to other people.

When You Need

Antibiotics from a Dentist

Antibiotics are needed for treating certain oral infections caused by bacteria—especially if fever or swelling is present. Antibiotic prophylaxis—when antibiotics are prescribed as a precaution to prevent infection—is sometimes used before a patient gets dental work. Before having dental work, talk to your dentist about any drug allergies or medical conditions that you have.

Always Take Antibiotics the Right Way

Your dentist can explain what dose needs to be taken, how long the antibiotic needs to be taken, at what times it should be taken, and if it needs to be taken with food and water. If your dentist prescribes an antibiotic, ask if it is the recommended antibiotic for your condition.

When Antibiotics Aren't Needed

Antibiotics do not work for oral infections caused by a virus, cold sores or fungal infections. They will also not cure a toothache. Your dentist must examine your mouth and determine what is causing the pain. Your dentist will decide if antibiotics are appropriate for your dental problem.



In 2016, 25.7 million antibiotic prescriptions were prescribed by dentists in the United States.

Possible Side Effects of Antibiotics

Antibiotics save lives. When you need antibiotics, the benefits usually outweigh the risks of side effects or antibiotic resistance.

When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you and the side effects could still hurt you.

Talk with your dentist if you develop any side effects, especially diarrhea, since that could be *Clostridioides* (formerly called *Clostridium*) *difficile* infection (also called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*), which needs to be treated immediately. *C. difficile* can lead to severe colon damage and death.

Reactions from antibiotics cause one out of six medication-related visits to the emergency department.

Other side effects from antibiotics can include:

- Rash
- Dizziness
- Nausea
- Yeast infections
- Life-threatening allergic reactions

Keep Your Mouth Healthy

- You can keep your mouth healthy by:
- Brushing your teeth with a fluoride toothpaste and flossing
 - Visiting your dentist regularly, even if you have no natural teeth or have dentures
 - Limiting alcoholic drinks
 - Drinking fluoridated water, especially if you have dry mouth
 - Not using any tobacco products or quitting smoking if you currently smoke
 - Managing chronic conditions

Improving the way dentists prescribe antibiotics, and the way we take antibiotics, helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these lifesaving drugs will be available for future generations.

Learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use at www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use.