



# Health Hints



## Fight Antibiotic Resistance With Sensible Approach To Winter Colds

(NAPSA)—Ah-CHOO!

You know what comes next—a runny nose, a stuffy head, maybe even fever, body aches and a sore throat. You want relief—now. But think twice before asking your doctor for an antibiotic. In the long run, not taking an antibiotic could save your life.

Here's why: Antibiotics do not cure viral infections...ever. Taking them repeatedly for common viral infections such as colds, sore throats and the flu, leads to the development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has named antibiotic resistance a growing public health threat. In fact, according to the World Health Organization, two Americans die each hour from infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

### Common Sense Can Help Prevent Super Bugs

Here are some guidelines you can follow to protect yourself and your family from antibiotic resistance:

1. Use antibiotics only when your healthcare provider prescribes them.
2. Take all of the antibiotics prescribed. If you do not take every dose of the medicine, you risk re-infection and increase the chance that antibiotic-resistant bacteria will develop.
3. Never take antibiotics prescribed for someone else.
4. Don't pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics to treat symptoms of a cold, flu or other viral illness.
5. Help your family fight disease: Check with your pediatrician to confirm your children are



up-to-date on their immunizations. Protect yourself by getting a flu shot.

6. Wash hands thoroughly and often to help prevent illness and the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

### Do You Need An Antibiotic?

Your doctor or other healthcare provider is the best person to determine if you need an antibiotic, but here are some basic guidelines:

- Colds and flu—No. Viruses cause colds and flu and viruses can't be cured with antibiotics.
- Cough or bronchitis—Maybe. Viruses often cause coughs and bronchitis and viruses can't be cured with antibiotics. However, if you have a lung condition or the illness lasts a long time, your infection may be caused by bacteria.
- Sore throat—Not unless you have strep throat. If you have a runny nose and cough, your sore throat is probably caused by a virus and can't be cured by antibiotics. Strep throat is caused by bacteria and requires treatment with antibiotics.

- Ear infections—Maybe. There are several types of ear infections. Antibiotics are effective against most, but not all, ear infections.

- Sinus infections—Maybe. Even if you have a runny nose, or yellow or green mucus coming from your nose, you may not need an antibiotic.

### Take Care of Yourself

If you have a viral infection such as a cold or the flu, you'll need to let the illness run its course. But there are plenty of things you can do to take care of yourself, like drinking plenty of fluids and getting plenty of rest. You can also take over-the-counter medications for symptoms such as a runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, aches and pains. Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for the most appropriate medication for your symptoms.

### Learn More

The Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH), a not-for-profit alliance of America's leading health plans and networks, created the Save Antibiotic Strength campaign in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA), and other leading community and healthcare organizations across the country to provide Americans with the information they need to use antibiotics wisely. To find out more about appropriate antibiotic use, speak to your doctor or other healthcare provider, visit [www.caqh.org/antibioticsinfo](http://www.caqh.org/antibioticsinfo) or call 1-888-WISE-USE for a free brochure.