



Why Your Child Does NOT Need Antibiotics for MOST Infections

Antibiotics are the most over prescribed medications in the American medical system! Most visits to the doctor for a "cold" which is viral leads to the almost automatic prescription for an antibiotic which will NOT be effective against a virus, and can lead to dangerous and even deadly complications and side effects!

**Caution - Unnecessary antibiotics CAN be harmful
!**

About antibiotics

Antibiotics are among the most powerful and important medicines known. When used properly they can save lives, but when used improperly, they can actually harm your child. Antibiotics should not be used to treat viral infections.

Bacteria and viruses

Two main types of germs - bacteria and viruses - cause most infections. In fact, viruses cause most of the sore throats and all colds. Bacterial infections can be cured by antibiotics, but common viral infections never are. Your child recovers from a viral infection when the illness has run its course.

Resistant Bacteria

New strains of bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics. These bacteria are not killed by some of our current antibiotics. Some of the resistant bacteria can be treated with more powerful medicines, which may need to be given in the vein (IV) in the hospital. The more antibiotics are prescribed, the higher the chance that your child will become infected with resistant bacteria.

How bacteria become resistant

Each time we take antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but a few resistant ones are left to grow and multiply. Repeated and improper use of antibiotics are some of the main causes of the increase in resistant bacteria. These resistant bacteria can also be spread to others in the family and the community.

You can protect your child from resistant bacteria. A prescription for parents: Learn about the differences between bacterial and viral infections, and talk to your doctor about them. Understand that antibiotics should not be used for viral infections - do NOT let a doctor unfamiliar with your child give them antibiotics they don't need!

When are antibiotics needed, and when are they not needed?

This complicated question is best answered by your doctor, and the answer depends on the specific diagnosis. Here are a few examples:

Ear infections: There are several types; some need antibiotics, but the majority actually DO NOT per the most recent studies. These are effectively treated with pain medication and time!

Sinus infections: Most children with thick or green nasal mucous do not have sinus infections - these are symptoms of the common cold. Antibiotics are needed only for the most long lasting or severe cases.

Cough or bronchitis: Children rarely need antibiotics for bronchitis - they need medications to make them feel better.

Sore throat: Most sore throats are caused by viruses. Only one main kind, "Strep Throat," requires antibiotics. Strep Throat must be diagnosed by a laboratory test done by swabbing your child's throat.

Colds: Colds are caused by viruses and may sometimes last for 2 weeks or more. Antibiotics have no effect on colds, but your doctor may have suggestions for comfort measures while the illness runs its course.

The infection may change - Viral infections may sometimes lead to bacterial infections. But treating viral infections with antibiotics to prevent bacterial infections does not work, and may lead to infections with resistant bacteria. Keep your doctor informed if the illness gets worse or lasts a long time, so that the proper treatment can be given, only when and if it is needed.

When your child is sick, antibiotics are not always the answer

Commonly asked questions

What can I do to protect my child from antibiotic resistant bacteria? Use antibiotics only when your doctor has determined that they might be effective. Antibiotics will not cure most colds, coughs, sore throats, or runny noses - children fight off colds on their own.

If mucus from the nose changes from clear to yellow or green, does this mean that my child needs an antibiotic? Yellow or green mucus does not mean that your child has a bacterial infection. It is normal for the mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.

Does this mean I should never give my child antibiotics? No. Antibiotics are very powerful medicines, and should only be used to treat bacterial infections. If an antibiotic is prescribed, make sure you take the entire course and never save the antibiotics for later use.

How do I know if my child has a viral or bacterial infection? Ask your doctor. If you think that your child might need treatment, you should contact your doctor. But remember, colds are caused by viruses, and should not be treated with antibiotics.