

The Overuse of Antibiotics

People often turn to prescription antibiotics when they are ill. However, antibiotics are only effective treating bacterial infections. Bacteria may cause infections such as:

- Strep Throat
- Urinary Tract Infections
- Some sexually transmitted diseases

Antibiotics do not treat viral infections, which are very common and include:

- Common cold
- Flu
- Runny noses
- Most sore throats (not caused by Strep)
- Acute bronchitis (most cases)
- Ear infections (most cases)



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Take Antibiotics as Prescribed

It is important to talk to your healthcare provider when taking antibiotics because they know which type of antibiotic will treat your infection. It is also very important to take them exactly as prescribed (don't skip doses, finish them entirely). If you stop taking them too soon, some bacteria may survive and cause you to become sick again.

Don't take someone else's antibiotics when you become sick. Sometimes antibiotics are not the right kind of treatment, especially if you are not sick because of bacteria. Additionally, someone else's antibiotics may not be the right type for your illness and cause you to be sick longer, or make your illness even worse.



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Lower Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria changes and becomes harder for the medicine to kill. This risk of antibiotic resistance increases the more you take antibiotics.

For example, *Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*) is a bacterium that can cause a type of infection that is a serious threat to public health. This type of infection can be caused by taking too many antibiotics, or taking antibiotics for the wrong reasons. Infections from *C. diff* cause 14,000 deaths and 250,000 hospital visits per year and are very hard to treat due to resistance to many antibiotics.

However, there are preventative measures you can take to help avoid antibiotic resistance.

- Don't take antibiotics "just in case" (If you take antibiotics when you don't actually need them, they might not work when you get sick in the future.)
- Only use antibiotics prescribed by your healthcare provider
- Finish the entire prescription (Don't stop when you feel better)
- Wash your hands often to help prevent the spread of bacteria to others

What about Antibacterial Soap?

Antibacterial soaps and cleansers may lead to changes in the bacteria that make them stronger (more resistant) against antibiotics. According to the FDA, there isn't any evidence that antibacterial soaps and cleansers are better at preventing the spread of germs and illnesses than regular soap and water.