

3 things to know about antibiotics this cold and flu season

Antibiotics are important and really help when we need them. Using antibiotics when they aren't needed helps resistant bacteria grow. Antibiotic resistant bacteria cause at least **2 million illnesses** and **23,000 deaths**¹ every year in the US, and **1/3** of all antibiotic prescriptions are unnecessary².

1. Antibiotics DO NOT work against viral infections like coughs, sore throats, colds or the flu.

Check out the chart for effective self-care methods.

2. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed or not taking every dose helps resistant bacteria to grow. If you are prescribed an antibiotic, take every dose as prescribed even if symptoms go away and never share antibiotics or save them for later.

3. Antibiotics can cause side effects like skin rashes, nausea, and diarrhea. They will kill bacteria living in your gut that keep you healthy. Using antibiotics when they are not necessary might also put you at risk for developing an antibiotic resistant infection.

Keep yourself healthy this season by preventing the spread of infection:

- Wash your hands often
- Stay up to date on pneumonia and flu vaccinations
- Eat healthy and exercise
- Get plenty of sleep
- Stay home when you aren't feeling well

Illness	Average Length of Illness	Self-care methods*
Cold	10-15 days	Use a humidifier or cool mist vaporizer and a decongestant or saline nasal spray
Sore Throat	2-10 days	Soothe a sore throat with ice chips, cold drinks, popsicles, smoothies or milkshakes Use a humidifier or cool mist vaporizer and lozenges
Cough	10-24 days	1 tsp of honey can be used as cough syrup to loosen the cough Use a humidifier or cool mist vaporizer or breathe steam from a bowl of hot water or shower or use lozenges
Sinus Infection	7-14 days	Use a warm compress over the nose and forehead to relieve pressure or a decongestant or saline nasal rinse or spray
Ear Infection	7-8 days	Use a warm moist cloth over the ear that hurts

* Take acetaminophen, ibuprofen or naproxen to relieve pain or fever and help your body fight infection by getting plenty of rest and drinking plenty of fluids, avoiding smoke and other air pollutants.

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2013.
 2. Pew Charitable trusts. Antibiotic Use in Outpatient Settings: Health experts create national targets to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions, 2016.