

## SIX SIMPLE AND SMART FACTS ABOUT ANTIBIOTIC USE

**1.** Antibiotics are life-saving drugs

Using antibiotics wisely is the best way to preserve their strength for future bacterial illnesses.

**2.** Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections

If your child has a viral infection like a cold, talk to a doctor or pharmacist about symptom relief. This may include over-the-counter medicine, a humidifier, or warm liquids.

**3.** Some ear infections **DO NOT** require an antibiotic

A doctor can determine what kind of ear infection your child has and if antibiotics will help. The doctor may follow expert guidelines to wait a couple of days before prescribing antibiotics since your child may get better without them.

**4.** Most sore throats **DO NOT** require an antibiotic

Only 1 in 5 children seen by a doctor for a sore throat has strep throat, which should be treated with an antibiotic. Your child's doctor can only confirm strep throat by running a test.

**5.** Green colored mucus is **NOT** a sign that an antibiotic is needed

As the body's immune system fights an infection, mucus can change color. This is normal and does not mean your child needs an antibiotic.

**6.** There are potential risks when taking any prescription drug

Antibiotic use can cause complications, ranging from an upset stomach to a serious allergic reaction. Your child's doctor will weigh the risks and benefits before prescribing an antibiotic.

Get Smart symptom relief tips & tools for your child at:  
[www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO (232-4636)



Viruses cause common illnesses that antibiotics CANNOT treat like:

- Colds
- Influenza (the flu)
- Runny noses
- Most coughs
- Most bronchitis
- Most sore throats
- Most sinus infections
- Some ear infections

Viral illnesses, like colds, usually go away without treatment without

Most cough and cold illnesses are caused by viruses. Antibiotic use can only cure bacterial illnesses—not viral illnesses.

