

Most illnesses are caused by two kinds of germs: bacteria or viruses. Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections – not viral infections.

Some bacteria can cause strep throat, some pneumonia and sinus infections. *Antibiotics can work.*

Viruses can cause the common cold, most coughs and the flu. *Antibiotics don't work.*

Using antibiotics for a virus:

- Will NOT help your child feel better
- Will NOT keep others from catching your child's illness

**A**ntibiotics should not be used to treat the common cold, runny noses and most coughs. Children fight off these viral illnesses on their own.

If your child's healthcare provider prescribes an antibiotic to treat a bacterial infection – like strep throat – be sure to give your child all of the medicine. Only using part of the prescription means that only part of the infection has been treated. Not finishing the medicine can cause resistant bacteria to develop.

For more information, see the Centers for  
Disease Control and Prevention website at:  
[www.cdc.gov/getsmart](http://www.cdc.gov/getsmart) or call 1-800-CDC-INFOetm