

## Why does taking antibiotics lead to antibiotic resistance?

Any time you take antibiotics, they can cause side effects and contribute to the development of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance is one of the most urgent threats to the public's health.

### Always remember:

1. Antibiotic resistance does not mean the body is becoming resistant to antibiotics; it means bacteria are developing the ability to defeat the antibiotics designed to kill them.
2. When bacteria become resistant, antibiotics cannot fight them, and the bacteria multiply.
3. Some resistant bacteria can be harder to treat and can spread to other residents in the nursing home.

## What if I have questions about antibiotics?

**Talk to your healthcare professional if you have any questions about your antibiotics, such as:**

- What infection does this antibiotic treat and do you know I have that infection?
- How long do I need to take this antibiotic?
- What are the potential side effects from this antibiotic?
- Could any of my other medications interact with this antibiotic?
- How will you know that the antibiotic is working for my infection?

**Improving the way healthcare professionals prescribe antibiotics, and the way we take antibiotics, helps keep us healthy now, helps fight antibiotic resistance, and ensures that these life-saving drugs will be available for future generations.**

# Do You Need Antibiotics?

**Information about antibiotics for nursing home residents and their families**



**Up to 70% of residents in a nursing home receive one or more courses of antibiotics each year.**

**40%–75% of antibiotics prescribed in nursing homes may be unnecessary or inappropriate.**



To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.



**BE  
ANTIBIOTICS  
AWARE**

**SMART USE, BEST CARE**



## Why is it important to *Be Antibiotics Aware* in nursing homes?

Antibiotics are life-saving drugs and are frequently prescribed in nursing homes. Remember, when antibiotics are needed, their benefits outweigh the risks of side effects and antibiotic resistance.

**When antibiotics aren't needed, they won't help you, and the side effects could still cause harm.**

## What do antibiotics treat?

**Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.** Antibiotics are critical tools for treating life-threatening conditions such as pneumonia and sepsis, which is the body's extreme response to an infection.

## What don't antibiotics treat?

**Antibiotics do not work on viruses**, such as those that cause colds, flu, bronchitis, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green. Antibiotics also won't help some common bacterial infections, including most cases of bronchitis, many sinus infections, and some ear infections.

## What are the potential side effects of antibiotics?

Common side effects from antibiotics can include:

- Rash
- Nausea
- Yeast infections
- Dizziness
- Diarrhea

**More serious side effects can include:**

- Life-threatening allergic reactions
- Interactions between antibiotics and other medications
- Infections with antibiotic-resistant bacteria, including *C. difficile* (or *C. diff*)

## What is a *C. diff* infection?

*C. diff* is a bacterial infection that needs immediate treatment. It can cause severe diarrhea that can lead to severe colon damage and death.

Antibiotics fight bacterial infections by killing bad germs, but can also get rid of the good germs that protect your body against harmful infections. The effect of antibiotics can last as long as several months. If you come in contact with *C. diff* germs during this time, you can get sick.

**Symptoms of a *C. diff* infection include:**

- Severe diarrhea
- Stomach tenderness or pain
- Fever
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite

**More than 3 million Americans receive care or reside in nursing homes every year.**

## How can I stay healthy?

You can stay healthy and keep others healthy by:

- Insisting healthcare professionals and visitors clean their hands before touching you by washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol
- Covering your cough to prevent the spread of germs
- Asking family or friends not to visit when they don't feel well
- Staying in your room when sick
- Protecting yourself by getting vaccines for flu and pneumonia and encouraging others around you to do the same

Talk to your healthcare professional about steps you can take to stay healthy and prevent infections.