

Is it harmful to use antibiotics for viral infections?

- It can be as they may cause side effects such as vomiting and diarrhoea.
- The more antibiotics you take, the less effective they become at fighting more serious infections as the bacteria in your body builds up resistance against them.
- By taking antibiotics only when you need them, you can help ensure they remain effective.

If I'm taking antibiotics, can I stop as soon as I feel better?

If prescribed an antibiotic, be sure to finish the whole course even if your symptoms have gone. If treatment finishes too soon some bacteria may still survive. Antibiotics are less likely to work if taken just when you remember, or in too low a dose.

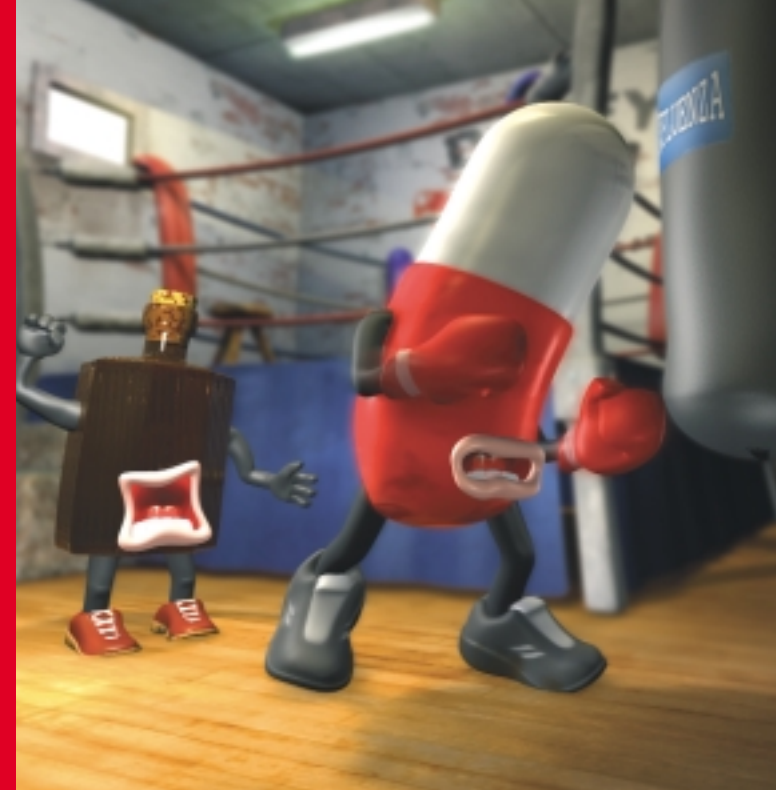


Against colds and flu, there's nothing antibiotics can do.



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**Protect
antibiotics
so they can
protect you**

**Against colds and flu,
there's nothing
antibiotics can do**

Antibiotics are important medicines that help fight serious infections caused by bacteria, such as kidney infections, meningitis, pneumonia and blood poisoning. But they don't cure infections caused by viruses (viral infections), like the flu and the common cold.



What are viral infections?

- All colds and flu, and most coughs and sore throats are viral infections.
- They're much more common than bacterial infections.
- Antibiotics will not work against viral infections.



If antibiotics don't cure viral infections, what do they cure?

They fight bacterial infections which can be more serious and less common than viral infections. However, bacteria can build up a resistance to antibiotics if we use them unwisely.

Why is 'antibiotic resistance' a problem now?

- Antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting infections because bacteria are clever; they adapt and find ways to survive the effects of an antibiotic.
- Some bacteria are now resistant to several antibiotics.
- We may not always be able to find new antibiotics to replace the old ones.



But colds always go to my chest. Surely I need an antibiotic then?

Generally, not. You'll recover from colds as soon as they've run their course, usually about 10-14 days. You need to see your doctor, though, if your cough lasts more than three weeks, you become very short of breath or develop chest pains, or you already have a serious medical condition.

If an antibiotic is not the answer to colds, what is?

- Medication such as paracetamol or an over-the-counter cold remedy can help ease the symptoms. Ask your pharmacist for advice.
- Drink lots of fluids, but stay at home and rest if you have a temperature.

My children are always getting infections. What should I do?

Children frequently get coughs and colds, especially when they start to mix with other children, but usually they fight these on their own. If you are particularly concerned do still seek advice, but don't necessarily expect an antibiotic to be prescribed. An alternative treatment may be suggested to help relieve the symptoms.

