

Antibiotics- Factsheet

What do antibiotics do?

Antibiotics are powerful medicines that help cure bacterial infections. Antibiotics are used to treat infections like strep throat, and some ear and sinus infections. They will not cure – or even help – viral or other non-bacterial illnesses, such as colds and the flu.

When do you need antibiotics?

Let your doctor decide. Some illnesses require antibiotics and when required, most require a prescription from a provider. Antibiotics may not be prescribed for viral illnesses (like colds or the flu) and other non-bacterial illnesses.

What happens if you take antibiotics when you do not need them?

If you or your children take an antibiotic when it's not needed, the antibiotic may lose its ability to fight infections. This means the next time you or your children really need the antibiotic, it might not work.

If you do get an antibiotic for your illness:

- Take the medication exactly as the doctor has instructed/prescribed.
- Always take the full prescription.
- Never share prescription medication with other family members or friends.

Don't make someone else sick! Here's how:

- Wash your hands often with water and soap for 20 seconds. You may also use sanitizing gel when your hands are not visibly soiled.
- Keep your hands away from your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and properly discard the used tissue into a waste basket.
- If you don't have a tissue, cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow—not your hands.

If you have questions, talk to a healthcare provider or contact the New Mexico Department of Health Helpline at 1-833-SWNURSE (1-833-796-8773).

Information is also available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at:

[Antibiotic Use and Antimicrobial Resistance Facts | Antibiotic Prescribing and Use | CDC](#)
[Healthy Habits: Antibiotic Do's and Don'ts](#)