

10 common questions about children and antibiotics



1 Why won't the doctor prescribe antibiotics for my child's cold?

Colds are almost always caused by viruses and will get better in a few days without using any medicine. Antibiotics are used to treat bacteria, not viruses.



2 Can't antibiotics be used to prevent colds from getting worse?

In most cases, bacterial infections do not follow viral infections. Antibiotics are almost never useful to prevent bacterial infections but can cause side effects, such as diarrhea.



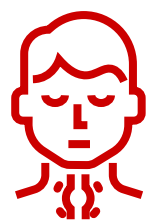
3 Is a nose draining green or yellow mucus a sign of bacterial infection?

Not necessarily: during a common cold, it is normal for mucus from the nose to get thick and to change from clear to yellow or green. This is most often from viral infection.



4 Aren't antibiotics supposed to treat ear infections?

At least half of all cases go away without antibiotics. Even some of the ear infections that are caused by bacteria will go away on their own without antibiotics. The pediatrician will indicate whether treatment is necessary.



5 Does my child have to take antibiotics for a sore throat?

Most cases of sore throats are caused by viruses, and if the doctor does not suspect any other cause for your child, antibiotics are not necessary.



6 Do antibiotics cause side effects?

Side effects such as nausea, diarrhea or stomach pain may occur in 1 out of 5 children. Any of these symptoms should be reported to the doctor.



7 How long does it take for an antibiotic to work?

Most bacterial infections improve 48-72 hours within starting treatment. If your child's symptoms do not improve or get worse within 72 hours, you should call the doctor.



8 Can antibiotics lead to resistant bacteria?

Yes, misuse of antibiotics can create resistant bacteria that can be spread to other children or adults. It is essential to use infection-specific antibiotics and not to misuse them.



9 What are antiviral medicines?

These are medicines that can be prescribed for children who are at higher risk of becoming severely ill if they get certain viruses, such as the flu. However, for the most common viruses that cause colds and coughs, there are no effective antivirals.



10 How can I use antibiotics safely?

You should follow your doctor's instructions exactly when giving the medicine, do not use antibiotics prescribed for anyone else or from previous treatments, store them securely at home during treatment and dispose any leftover antibiotics by taking them back to the pharmacy.