



Get Smart: Know When to Use Antibiotics

Unnecessary Antibiotics Can Be Harmful to Your Child

A Prescription for Parents: Five Hints to Understanding Antibiotic Usage

When are antibiotics necessary? Your doctor can best answer this complicated question and the answer depends on the diagnosis. Here are a few examples:

1. **Ear infections:** There are several types; many need antibiotics, but some do not.
2. **Sinus infections:** Most children with thick or green mucus do not have sinus infections. Antibiotics are needed for some long-lasting or severe cases.
3. **Cough or bronchitis:** Children rarely need antibiotics for bronchitis.
4. **Sore throat:** Viruses cause most cases. Only one major kind, "strep throat," requires antibiotics. This condition must be diagnosed by a laboratory test.
5. **Colds:** Colds are caused by viruses and may last for two weeks or longer. Antibiotics have no effect on colds, but your doctor may have suggestions for obtaining comfort while the illness runs its course.

It is worth noting that viral infections sometimes lead to bacterial infections. But treating viral infections with antibiotics will not prevent bacterial infections and may trigger infections with resistant bacteria. Keep your doctor informed if the illness gets worse, or lasts a long time, so that the proper treatment can be given as needed.

Commonly Asked Questions

1. **What can I do to protect my child from antibiotic resistant bacteria?**
Use antibiotics only when your doctor has determined that they are likely to be effective. Antibiotics will not cure most colds, coughs, sore throats, or runny noses. Children fight off colds on their own.
2. **If mucus from the nose changes from clear to yellow or green, does this mean that my child needs an antibiotic?**
Yellow or green mucus does not mean that your child has a bacterial infection. It is normal for the mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.
3. **Does this mean I should never give my child antibiotics?**
Antibiotics are very powerful medicines and should only be used to treat bacterial infections. If an antibiotic is prescribed, make sure you take the entire course and never save the medication for later use.



4. **How do I know if my child has a viral or bacterial infection?**

Ask your doctor. If you think that your child might need treatment, you should contact your doctor. But remember, colds are caused by viruses and should not be treated with antibiotics.

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