Did You Know?

- As many as 80% of ear infections will clear up on their own.

- Antibiotic resistance occurs most often in children who take antibiotics for ear infections.

- Only about 15% of people who go to the doctor with a bad sore throat have strep throat.

- Strep throat bacteria are becoming resistant to common antibiotics.

Sources:
American Academy of Family Physicians, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, New England Journal of Medicine, Journal of the American Medical Association

- Many people believe that bronchitis has to be treated with antibiotics. Yet almost all cases of bronchitis are caused by viruses. Antibiotics don't kill viruses.

- Most people who see the doctor for sinus problems do not have a sinus infection.

- About 2/3 of all sinus infections clear up on their own.

- Thick yellow or green mucus is normal as your body fights a virus. It doesn't mean you need an antibiotic.

- Colds can last longer than two weeks. The average child gets six colds a year.

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AWARE
Alliance Working for Antibiotic Resistance Education

WSMA
Washington State Medical Association

Do you really need an antibiotic?

Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may harm you

Taking Antibiotics When They Are Not Needed May Harm You

Antibiotics are used to treat illnesses caused by bacteria, such as strep throat.

Antibiotics don't kill viruses. They don't work against colds or flu and most bronchitis, sinus problems or earaches.

Taking an antibiotic won't make a cold or flu go away any faster. In fact, it may cause serious side effects, such as:

- Diarrhea
- Headache
- Rash
- Vomiting

It can also destroy the good bacteria in your stomach, and weaken your immune system.

"Super Germs" Are Harder to Kill

Overuse of antibiotics creates stronger germs. These "super germs" become resistant to the antibiotic. Then, when you really need an antibiotic to kill these bacteria, it may not work.

When an antibiotic no longer works, it can mean longer and more costly treatment.

Some germs are already becoming resistant to common antibiotics, such as penicillin and amoxicillin.

You create "super germs" when:

- You take an antibiotic for a cold, flu, or other viral illness.
- You don't complete the entire prescription you are given for a bacterial infection.
- You overuse antibacterial soaps.

Finish Your Whole Prescription

If you get a prescription for antibiotics:

- Always finish the whole bottle. The last few pills kill the toughest germs.
- Talk with your health care provider and make sure you understand why you need them.

- Don't save them. Don't share them. Antibiotics are prescribed for specific conditions and may not be right for another illness or another person. Your provider should be the one to decide what kind to take and when to take them.
- Talk with your provider or pharmacist if you have side effects, or if you miss a dose.

Wash Your Hands to Prevent Infections

Most germs are spread when you touch your hands to your mouth, nose and eyes. Washing your hands often helps keep germs from entering your body. Use soap and warm water. Antibacterial soaps are not needed.

Use Home Remedies

Let your body heal itself. Your immune system can fight off most infections. It may take a week or longer, but most colds get better on their own. Many bacterial infections do, too.

Home remedies and over-the-counter medicines can help relieve viral symptoms, such as a cough, stuffy or runny nose, earache, fever or sore throat.

Washington State Department of Health

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