

Short Guide to Wise Use of ANTIBIOTICS



PREVENTING
COMMON
ILLNESSES

Antibiotics are important medicines that stop bacterial infections.

Antibiotics are a type of medicine used to treat infections caused by bacteria. Infections can be caused by viruses or bacteria. Antibiotics do not help viral infections, and can also cause unpleasant side effects.

Antibiotic resistance is a natural way bacteria survive and multiply. Bacteria change so that antibiotics can't stop them. Antibiotic resistant bacteria can develop if you take antibiotics when you don't need them. These resistant bacteria are sometimes called "**superbugs**."

Viral Infections

VS

Bacterial Infections

- Include colds, influenza, croup, laryngitis, chest colds (bronchitis), and most sore throats.
- Are usually more contagious than bacterial infections.
- Usually get better in 4-5 days, but sometimes as long as three weeks.

- Are less common than viral infections.
 - Examples include strep throat and some types of pneumonia.
- ✓ **Antibiotics work for bacterial infections, but are not always needed.**

X Antibiotics do not work for viral infections.

Handwashing is the best way to stop the spread of infections.

How to Wash Your Hands



1 Wet your hands



2 Apply plain soap



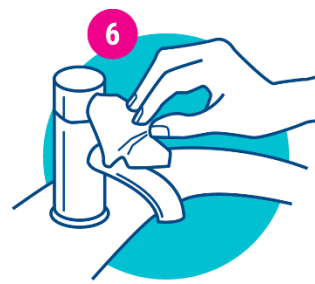
3 Rub hands together



4 Rinse your hands



5 Dry your hands



6 Turn off taps with paper towel

When to Wash Your Hands

- Before meals
- Before, during and after preparing food
- Before breastfeeding
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the toilet
- Before and after changing diapers or feminine hygiene products
- After blowing your nose or wiping a child's nose
- After handling objects shared with others like pens
- Before inserting or removing contact lenses
- Before and after you care for someone who is sick
- After touching or feeding an animal, or handling animal waste

Top Tips for Antibiotic Safety

- 1 Wash your hands regularly with plain soap, and teach your children to do the same.
- 2 Discuss with your doctor whether your infection is viral or bacterial and whether an antibiotic is needed.
- 3 Be patient when you (or your child) have cold symptoms, cough, or a sore throat. Most viral illnesses will take 4–5 days before getting better and up to 3 weeks for a full recovery.
- 4 Ensure you and your children are up to date with routine immunizations, including the annual influenza (flu) vaccine.
- 5 Cover your nose and mouth when you sneeze or cough, and teach your children to do the same.

Questions to Discuss with Your Doctor

If your doctor suggests an antibiotic, ask these questions:



“What side effects should I expect?”

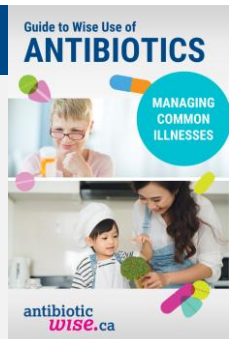
“Are there other things I can do to help me get better?”



Where to Learn More

For immediate health advice from a healthcare professional, call **HealthLink BC at 8-1-1** (available 24/7 in more than 130 different languages), or visit www.healthlinkbc.ca

To learn more about symptoms, management and prevention measures for specific illnesses, read the full *Guide to Wise Use of Antibiotics* at www.antibioticwise.ca



antibiotic
wise.ca


BC Centre for Disease Control
Provincial Health Services Authority


BRITISH
COLUMBIA