

Get better without antibiotics

This leaflet tells you why it is important to get the right treatment for common illnesses, such as colds, coughs and flu without using antibiotics.

What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medicines that treat infections caused by bacteria. However, bacteria can adapt and find ways to survive the effects of the medicine - this is called **antibiotic resistance**. When this happens, the antibiotic no longer works as the bacteria has become used to it and actually grows stronger. Some bacteria that cause infections in hospitals, such as MRSA, are resistant to several antibiotics.



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Please contact us if you would like this in a different language/format.

NHS



When you have a cold or flu,
Antibiotics are not for you!



How should I treat my cold?

The best way to treat most colds, coughs or sore throats is to drink plenty of water and to rest. Colds can last about 2 weeks and may end with a cough and bringing up phlegm.

There are many treatments to help you - for example, paracetamol.

Ask your pharmacist for advice.



See your doctor if:

- A cold lasts more than 3 weeks
- You become breathless
- You have chest pains
- You already have a chest complaint

So when will I be prescribed antibiotics?

Your doctor should only prescribe antibiotics when you need them - for example, if you have a kidney infection or pneumonia. They can be life-saving for infections such as meningitis. By using them only when necessary, antibiotics are more likely to work when you really need them.

What can I do about antibiotic resistance?

Only use antibiotics when it's appropriate. Most coughs and colds get better just as quickly without antibiotics. If they are prescribed, **always complete the full course** - if you don't, some bacteria may be left and they could develop a resistance.

For more information visit:



WWW.NHS.UK/ANTIBIOTICS



What about my children, they're always getting coughs and colds?

It's very common for children to get coughs and colds, especially when they go to school and mix with other children. **Ask your pharmacist for advice.**

If the symptoms persist and you are concerned, see your doctor, but do not expect to be given an antibiotic.

Why should antibiotics not be used to treat coughs and colds?

Antibiotics are good for treating infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics **do not** work against infections caused by **viruses**. All colds, most coughs and sore throats are caused by **viruses**.

