

What about bacterial infections?

Normally infections such as cough/bronchitis, sore ear, sore throat and nasal symptoms are caused by viral infections, but sometimes they can be caused by bacterial infections.

Your child's own immune system can clear many of these infections without the need for antibiotics. Antibiotics do little to speed up your child's recovery from most common infections.

However if your child has a more serious bacterial infection such as meningitis or pneumonia they will require treatment with antibiotics. This is why it is important to use antibiotics wisely, to ensure they are more likely to work when your child really needs them.

Contact your doctor:

- If your child's symptoms appear to change or become worse.
- If he/she does not begin to improve after a few days.
- If you are worried that a serious illness is developing.

Remember:

- Doctors are skilled in knowing which conditions need antibiotics.
- Do not be surprised if your doctor does not prescribe an antibiotic for your child for a viral infection, or even for a mild bacterial infection.

Meningitis

Symptoms of meningitis can develop within hours. Seek **urgent** medical advice if your child shows symptoms related to meningitis:

- Sudden onset of high temperature.
- High temperature but cold hands & feet.
- Very severe headache.
- Dislike of bright lights.
- Drowsiness, blank staring, inactivity.
- High pitched moaning or whimpering.
- Vomiting and diarrhoea.
- Infant not feeding.
- Painful joints or limbs (particularly leg pain).
- Difficulty breathing.
- Fitting.
- Stiff neck.
- Pale or blotchy complexion.
- Rash that does not fade with pressure (pinprick blood spots under the skin, spreading to form bruises under the skin).

For further information: Speak to your doctor, practice nurse or pharmacist.

Does my child need an antibiotic?



Patient information leaflet on common infections in children: Coughs, Colds & Sore Throats, Runny/Blocked Nose

What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are important medicines used to treat infections caused by bacteria.

Antibiotics **DO NOT** treat infections caused by viruses.

What are viral infections?

Viral infections are very common. They include all colds and flu, and many infections of the nose, ears, throat and chest (coughs/bronchitis).

Why should I NOT give my child antibiotics to treat viral infections?

- Antibiotics **DO NOT** kill viruses.
- Giving your child antibiotics they do not need, e.g. to treat viral infections, can lead to antibiotic resistance.
- Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria are no longer killed by antibiotics. As a result some antibiotics have become less effective against the bacterial infections they were designed to treat.
- Infections caused by bacteria resistant to antibiotics can be very difficult to treat.
- In recent years, fewer new antibiotics have been discovered. We need to protect the antibiotics we have, to ensure they continue to work now and in the future.

How can antibiotic resistance be avoided?

You can help to avoid antibiotic resistance by only giving your child antibiotics when he/she really needs them and when they have been recommended for your child by a healthcare professional.

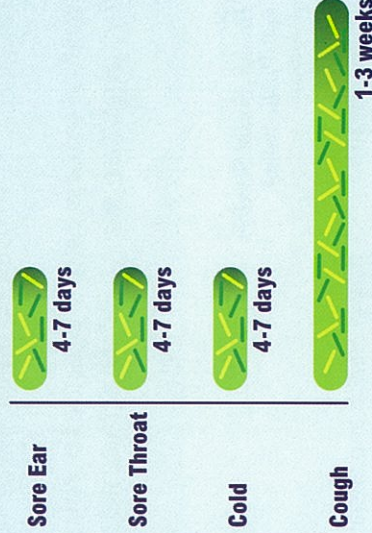
If your child is prescribed an antibiotic, follow the directions for use carefully and always make sure your child completes the full recommended course.

Antibiotics often cause side-effects

Antibiotics may cause side-effects such as thrush, diarrhoea, rash and stomach upset. They can also cause allergic reactions, which can sometimes be severe.

How long will it take my child to get better?

If your child is generally well, their own immune system will usually start to clear up most common infections within a few days, without the need for antibiotics. However it may take a little bit longer for symptoms to clear completely. See below:



Treatment options to ease my child's symptoms

Rest	To help your child's own immune system fight the infection.
Pain & fever relief	Treat with paracetamol or ibuprofen. Do not give more than the recommended doses.
Fluids	Give your child plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration. Avoid food and drinks that may irritate a sore throat.
No smoking	Make sure no-one smokes around your child.
Over-the-counter medicines (OTC)	Ask your community pharmacist for advice. <i>Cough and cold medicines bought OTC are not recommended for children under 6 years of age.</i>

To help prevent the spread of viral infections:

Encourage your child to cover his/her mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.

Dispose of tissues following use.

Wash your hands and your child's hands regularly, particularly after sneezing or blowing their nose.