

**Have a sore throat,
cough, or runny nose?
You probably don't
need antibiotics.**



**Antibiotics might not
help you – and they
may harm you.**

Antibiotics can help prevent and treat some bacterial infections. But often times, they aren't necessary. And if you take antibiotics when you don't need them, they might not work when you do need them.

Make sure you're taking antibiotics for the right reasons by asking the five questions on the other side.

5 QUESTIONS to ask your doctor before you take antibiotics:

- 1 Do I really need antibiotics?** Ask if you have a bacterial infection, like strep throat, pneumonia, or a symptomatic bladder infection. Antibiotics don't work for viruses like the common cold and flu.
- 2 What are the risks?** Antibiotics can cause diarrhea, vomiting, serious allergic reactions, and more. If you take them when you don't need them, they might not work for you in the future when you really do need them.
- 3 Are there simpler, safer options?** This may include rest and liquids, or drops for conditions like swimmer's ear, which can be more effective and safer than oral antibiotics.
- 4 How much do they cost?** Antibiotics don't usually cost much. But if you develop side effects or they don't work for you when you do need them, that can get expensive.
- 5 How do I take antibiotics correctly?** Take them exactly as your doctor prescribes, even if you feel better.

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www.choosingwisely.org/patient-resources

This information is to use when talking with your healthcare provider. It is not a substitute for medical advice and treatment. Use this information at your own risk.