

Taking your antibiotics

- Always take antibiotics exactly as prescribed.
- You may have to take between one and four tablets or liquid doses a day.
- Try and take your antibiotics at regular times each day.
- Always complete the course. If you don't the infection may come back and next time the antibiotics may not work.

Effective antibiotic use

- You should only use antibiotics prescribed by your healthcare professional.
- Do not expect your doctor to prescribe antibiotics every time you have an infection.
- Your body's immune system can often protect against infection without the need for antibiotics.
- Antibiotics do not work against illnesses caused by viruses.

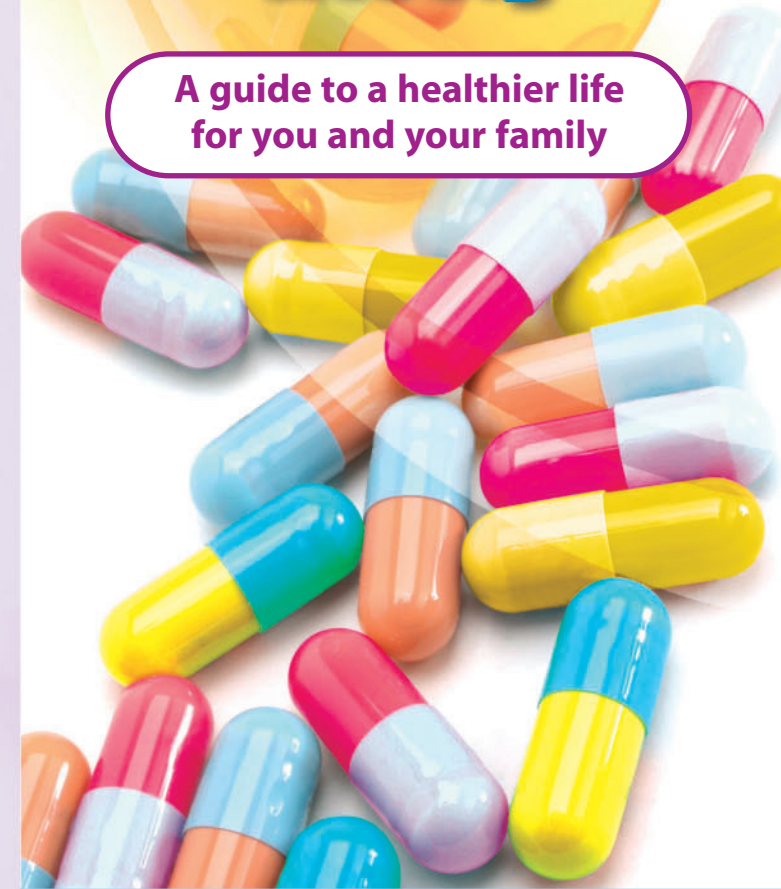
- Overusing antibiotics can cause resistance.
- If your doctor decides you need an antibiotic, make sure you take them as prescribed.
- Even if you start to feel better, always complete the full course.
- Never save antibiotics for later use or share them with other people.
- One of the best ways to avoid infections is to follow good hygiene practices.
- Washing your hands, especially after visiting the toilet and before preparing food can significantly reduce your risk of infection. Good home hygiene is important too.
- Make sure that family immunisations are up-to-date.



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Use antibiotics wisely

A guide to a healthier life for you and your family



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South West London

What is an antibiotic?

An antibiotic is a substance that harms or destroys the bacteria that cause infection and disease. We take antibiotics to fight bacterial infections.



Can antibiotics cure all infections?

Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections. They have no effect on infections caused by viruses (e.g. colds, flu, measles, HIV) fungi (e.g. ringworm, thrush) or parasites (e.g. tapeworms).

Can antibiotics be harmful?

Used at the correct dose antibiotics will not harm most people. Some individuals may experience

side-effects, e.g. diarrhoea. If after taking antibiotics a person experiences nausea/vomiting, rashes, dizziness, breathlessness or other symptoms this could indicate an allergic reaction.

See a healthcare professional immediately if you suspect an allergic reaction.

Antibiotics not only kill harmful bacteria they also kill the 'friendly' bacteria that live in and on our bodies. These 'friendly' bacteria are the ones that help us to function normally, e.g. by helping us to digest our food. It is important therefore to only use antibiotics when absolutely necessary and when prescribed by your healthcare professional.

What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting bacterial infections because the bacteria are able to rapidly develop new ways of becoming resistant to them.

Some types of bacteria are also naturally resistant to some of the antibiotics that we already have.

The more we use antibiotics, the more likely it is that bacteria will develop resistance.

Preventing antibiotic resistance?

Using antibiotics unnecessarily can lead to antibiotic resistance. This means that the antibiotic might not work when you really need it. Resistant bacteria can spread to other people, putting everyone at risk of untreatable infections.

To help prevent resistance, never use antibiotics unless your healthcare professional prescribes them. Your immune system can fight off many infections without the need for antibiotics. Your healthcare professional will know whether you have an infection that needs antibiotic treatment.