When you should *and* *shouldn't* take antibiotics

You should always talk to your healthcare provider about when to take an antibiotic, but here are some basic guidelines:

- **Colds and flu** – These illnesses are caused by viruses. They can't be cured with antibiotics.

- **Cough or bronchitis** – These are typically caused by viruses. However, if you have a lung condition or the illness lasts a long time, your infection may be caused by bacteria and your physician may want to give you an antibiotic.

- **Sore throat** – Most sore throats, particularly those associated with runny nose and cough, are caused by viruses and can't be cured by antibiotics. However, strep throat, which can be determined by doing a lab test, is caused by bacteria and requires treatment with antibiotics.

- **Ear infections** – There are several types of ear infections. Antibiotics are effective for the vast majority, but not all, ear infections.

- **Sinus infections** – Even if you have a runny nose, or yellow or green mucus coming from your nose, you may not need an antibiotic. Antibiotics should only be used for severe infections or infections that last more than two weeks.

Save Antibiotic Strength:

A partnership to preserve and protect the effectiveness of antibiotics

This information is brought to you by America's leading health plans and networks, collaborating in a partnership called the Council for Affordable Quality Healthcare (CAQH). Our **Save Antibiotic Strength** campaign seeks to provide Americans with the information they need to use antibiotics wisely.

CAQH is partnering with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Alliance for the Prudent Use of Antibiotics (APUA), and other leading community and healthcare organizations across the country to help preserve and protect the effectiveness of antibiotics.

To find out more about how to use antibiotics appropriately, speak to your physician or other healthcare provider, or visit **www.caqh.org/antibioticsinfo.**

ABOUT THE COUNCIL FOR AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTHCARE

CAQH is a not-for-profit alliance of America's leading health plans and networks committed to improving the quality of healthcare and reducing administrative burdens for patients, physicians and payers. Created in 1999, CAQH member organizations provide healthcare coverage for more than 100 million Americans.

CAQH COUNCIL FOR AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTHCARE

a catalyst for positive change

CAQH COUNCIL FOR AFFORDABLE QUALITY HEALTHCARE

Everything you need to know about antibiotics and tips on how to use them wisely.

Keeping the promise of a healthy future

Can you imagine a world without antibiotics? Antibiotics have saved millions of lives since penicillin, the world's first antibiotic, was discovered seventy-five years ago.

Yet today, many commonly used antibiotics aren't working against the bacteria they were designed to kill. Why? Each time you take antibiotics when they're not needed or use them improperly, your body can develop more powerful germs – "super bugs" – that can be difficult to treat. Then, when you really need an antibiotic, it may not work because the infection is *resistant* to treatment. This is called antibiotic resistance.

More than
50 percent of all antibiotics prescribed are unnecessary.[1]

1: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Each day, nearly fifty Americans die from infections that can no longer be cured by antibiotics. The good news is that there are some simple steps you can take to protect yourself and your family. This brochure will help you understand when you should and shouldn't use antibiotics.

By using antibiotics wisely, you will help preserve a healthy future for yourself, your loved ones and for millions of others around the world.

Nearly 50 Americans die every day from antibiotic-resistant infections.[2]

2: World Health Organization

What can I do to protect my family's health?
TIPS FOR SAFE ANTIBIOTIC USE

1 Use antibiotics *only* when your healthcare provider prescribes them.

2 Take all of the antibiotics prescribed. Even when you feel better, you may still have infectious bacteria in your body that could make you sick again.
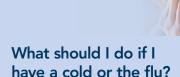
3 Never take antibiotics prescribed for someone else, or save some of an antibiotic for the next time you get sick.

4 Don't pressure your doctor to prescribe antibiotics to treat symptoms of a cold, flu or other viral illness.

5 Check with your pediatrician to confirm that your children are up-to-date on their immunizations. This is another important step in helping your family fight disease.

6 Wash your hands thoroughly and often to help prevent illness and the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), continued overuse could make today's antibiotics useless in just 10 to 20 years[3]

3: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

What should I do if I have a cold or the flu?

Typically, the best idea is to let the illness run its course. But there are things you can do to help you feel better:

- Drink lots of fluids and get plenty of rest.
- Take over-the-counter medications for symptoms such as a runny nose, cough, sore throat, fever, and aches and pains. Ask your physician or pharmacist for the most appropriate medication for your symptoms.
- At the beginning of each flu season, protect yourself by getting a flu shot.

Is it viral or bacterial?

Take a look at this chart of common illnesses; most of these illnesses are caused by viruses and antibiotics cannot cure them.

Illness	Usual Cause	Antibiotic Needed
Cold	Virus	No
Flu	Virus	No
Sore Throat	Virus	No
Strep Throat	Bacteria	Yes
Runny Nose	Virus	No

Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)