

BACTERIA OR VIRUS?

COMMON ILLNESSES	BACTERIA OR VIRUS	ANTIBIOTIC NEEDED?
Strep Throat	Bacteria	YES
Chest Cold /Bronchitis	Virus	NO
Common Cold	Virus	NO
Flu	Virus	NO
Asthma	Virus	NO
Urinary Tract Infection	Bacteria	YES

Questions?

If you have any questions about the information in this brochure, please inquire with your healthcare provider or call Sheridan Memorial Hospital Pharmacy at 307.672.1065 and ask to speak with a pharmacist.

A PATIENT'S GUIDE TO ANTIBIOTICS



Over-use of antibiotics is a growing concern throughout the world. Together, with your help, we can reduce the amount of antibiotics used unnecessarily and prevent antibiotic resistance and other possible adverse side effects.



If you are unsure whether your symptoms are related to bacteria or viral illness, please see your healthcare provider. Some illnesses can be confirmed very quickly and others may require testing.



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Antibiotics provide treatment of bacterial illnesses not viral illnesses. When used appropriately for bacterial infection - in the right dosage and duration - antibiotics can save lives.

Q: What is antibiotic resistance?

A: When bacteria in the body are exposed to an antibiotic, it develops a mechanism to protect itself from being destroyed. The more antibiotics a person takes, the more likely germs will become resistant.

Over time, some infections may not respond to simple antibiotic treatment and then require a stronger antibiotic treatment, which may accompany adverse side effects.

Q: When I am sick, how do I know if I have a viral illness or bacterial infection?

A: Based on your symptoms and a physical exam, your doctor can determine if you have a virus or bacterial infection. Colds, flu and most sore throats are viral illnesses and should NOT be treated with antibiotics.

Q: What are antibiotics used for?

A: Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by bacteria, such as strep throat, pneumonia and urinary tract infections.

Q: If I have a viral illness, what harm is there in taking an antibiotic?

A: When an antibiotic is inappropriately taken to treat a viral illness, it can cause a serious type of infection called C. Difficile. It can also kill the really good “germs” that protect you against serious infections.

Taking antibiotics unnecessarily can also lead to developing antibiotic resistance or “superbugs” that doctors may not be able to prevent from spreading.

In addition, antibiotics taken when not needed may cause other problems that can hurt you or make you uncomfortable such as rash, allergic reactions or nausea and vomiting. It can also harm your kidneys or other organs.



Q: What treatment options do I have for a viral illness?

A: Drink plenty of fluids, get plenty of rest and use saline nose spray to moisten dry nasal passages. Use medicine to reduce fever when needed. Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist about which over-the-counter products may relieve your viral illness symptoms.

A cold normally lasts a few days to a week, while the flu may make you feel tired and low on energy for several weeks.