

Be Antibiotic Aware

Why are antibiotics important?

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by **bacteria** (germs). Antibiotics save lives!

What do antibiotics help with?

Antibiotics kill the bad (and good) bacteria in our bodies. Some common infections treated with antibiotics are:

- › urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- › pneumonia (lung infection)
- › strep throat

What don't antibiotics help with?

Antibiotics **DO NOT** kill viruses.

DO NOT take antibiotics for:

- › the common cold
- › the flu (influenza)
- › any infection caused by a virus

What are common side effects of antibiotics?

- › rash
- › dizziness
- › nausea (feeling sick to your stomach)
- › diarrhea (loose, watery poop)
- › yeast infections
- › antibiotic resistance (antibiotics may not work as well the next time you need them)

Serious side effects include:

- › *C. difficile* infection which is a type of bacteria found in the intestine (gut or bowel) and stool (poop)
- › severe (very bad) or life-threatening allergic reaction

Talk with your health care provider if you have any questions about your antibiotics, or if you start having side effects, especially diarrhea. This may be a sign of *C. difficile* infection, which is more serious.

What is antibiotic resistance?

- Antibiotic resistance is when bacteria get stronger after antibiotics are used. This means that antibiotics do not work as well to kill bacteria and treat infections.
- Using antibiotics too much, especially when they are not needed or for too long, leads to antibiotic resistance.

Why should I care about antibiotic resistance? I don't take antibiotics.

- You can be infected by antibiotic-resistant bacteria whether you take antibiotics or not.
- 15 Canadians die each day from antibiotic-resistant bacteria.
- Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest threats to global health, because we will not be able to fight some bacteria if they get too strong.
- You may need antibiotics in the future to treat or prevent an infection, such as during surgery.

What can I do to fight antibiotic resistance?

- Wash your hands.
- Cough into your elbow instead of your hand to avoid spreading germs. If you do cough into your hand, wash your hands as soon as possible.
- Get vaccinated. Check with your health care provider about your vaccines.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Don't take antibiotics if you don't need them. Think twice before taking antibiotics!

**Antibiotics are a precious resource that we must protect.
Thank you for doing your part to fight antibiotic resistance.**