

Facts on antibiotics and resistance



Each year in the U.S., at least 2.8 million people become infected with an antibiotic resistant infection.



Antibiotic resistant bacteria cause more than 35,000 deaths in the US each year.



If you take an antibiotic, it becomes more likely that if you develop a new bacterial infection, it will be resistant to the antibiotic.



Infections caused by antibiotic resistant bacteria can be more difficult or complicated to treat.



Stopping the spread of antibiotic resistance will keep antibiotics working now and for the future.

If you are wondering whether antibiotics are the right medicine for you, ask your healthcare team. Remember, antibiotics can be powerful medicine but if they are not needed, they can be harmful. Your healthcare team will make sure you get the best care and will only use antibiotics when necessary.

Visit our web portal for more information regarding the proper use of antibiotics and antimicrobial stewardship.

fairfaxcounty.gov/health/sass/patients



Strengthening Antimicrobial Stewardship for Skilled Nursing Facilities is an initiative of the Fairfax County Health Department.



To request this information in an alternate format, contact the Fairfax County Health Department 703-246-2411 TTY 711 . A Fairfax County, Va., publication. November 2023

Do you need antibiotics?

Information about antibiotics for nursing home residents and their families.





Why is it important to be antibiotics aware in nursing homes?

- Antibiotics are powerful medicines and are effective in treating many serious infections.
- However, if an antibiotic is taken when it is not needed, it can cause harm.
- Taking antibiotics only when needed will bring the most benefit and reduce the chance of suffering harm.

How can antibiotics be harmful?

- Any time an antibiotic is used, a side effect can occur, such as a skin rash, diarrhea, or a yeast infection. While side effects generally are limited, some may be life threatening.
- Also, every time we use antibiotics, there is a chance that bacterial and fungal germs in our body will develop antibiotic resistance: the ability to fight off the drugs designed to kill them.
- These antibiotic resistant infections can be more difficult to treat which means that antibiotics might not work when you really need them.

What do antibiotics treat?

- Antibiotics are only effective in treating infections caused by bacterial germs.
- Antibiotics are important to treat life-threatening bacterial infections such as pneumonia and sepsis, an infection of the blood.
- They also can be important for some respiratory infections such as strep throat and for urinary tract infections.



SAY YES TO ANTIBIOTICS

when needed for certain infections caused by **bacteria**.



SAY NO TO ANTIBIOTICS

for **viruses**, such as colds and flu, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow or green.



Colds, flu and runny noses: treat with antibiotics or not?

- These illnesses are caused by viruses, not bacteria.
- Antibiotics do not work on viruses and will not be helpful to treat these illnesses – even if the mucus is thick, yellow, or green.
- The best way to treat viral respiratory infections is staying home and resting, drinking plenty of fluids, and using a medicine such as Tylenol or ibuprofen to relieve aches and fever.

Urinary tract infections: treat with antibiotics or not?

- Your healthcare team will determine if you have a urinary tract infection (UTI) that needs to be treated with antibiotics or not.
- Confusion or mental status changes, or dark or cloudy urine does not mean you have a UTI.
- If you do have a UTI, antibiotics are helpful. But if you don't, then treatment can be harmful.
- Other causes of confusion or mental status change include dehydration and side effects of other medication you are taking, and these are not treated with antibiotics.



Up to **70%** of residents in a nursing home receive one or more courses of antibiotics each year.