

# What You Need to Know about Antibiotics

When taken unnecessarily, antibiotics can cause harm. Antibiotic resistance affects adults and children, causing 23,000 deaths each year in the United States. Take antibiotics as needed and as directed.

## Good Antibiotic Use Practices

Only take antibiotics to treat certain infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics may cause more harm than good when used to treat infections caused by viruses. Some infections caused by bacteria may not require antibiotics, such as some ear infections and many sinus infections.

Take antibiotics exactly as prescribed. It is important to take antibiotics in the correct frequency, and to finish the dosage.

Do not save unfinished antibiotics for later use. Contact your pharmacist about safely disposing leftover medicine.

Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. This can be dangerous and may cause harmful side effects.

## Potential Harmful Side Effects of Use

Antibiotics can be disruptive to the gut microbiome, and to digestive processes, resulting in symptoms such as diarrhea, nausea, indigestion, and vomiting.

Some antibiotics can cause increased skin sensitivity resulting in symptoms such as rashes, redness, and peeling when skin is exposed to the sun.

Some antibiotics, when used for a prolonged period of time, can cause fungal infections in the mouth, digestive track, and vagina.

Some antibiotics, when used for a prolonged period of time, can cause staining to the teeth and bones.

Some antibiotics can cause adverse reactions when taken with other medications. Please consult with your doctor before taking antibiotics in combination with any drug or alcohol.

Antibiotics are essential and lifesaving drugs.

It is important to know the risks.

Consult with your medical provider or pharmacists about ways to feel better if an antibiotic is not needed.

To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit:

[oeps.wv.gov/au](https://oeps.wv.gov/au) | [cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/core-elements](https://cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/core-elements)