

Cold Care

(And Why Antibiotics Won't Help Your Cold)

Why Antibiotics Won't Help

Most infections are caused either by virus or bacteria. Viruses cause the cold and flu. Bacteria cause ear infections and strep throat, among others.

Your cold is the result of a virus in your upper respiratory tract. Colds spread easily through droplets in the air caused by a cough or sneeze.

Because a cold is viral, antibiotics won't help. Antibiotics are only used to kill bacteria.

Your doctor won't treat your cold with antibiotics. This is important. When antibiotics are used too often, the bacteria change. They become resistant. This means the antibiotics will no longer work. Once resistant to antibiotics, bacteria can multiply and be passed on to other people.

Virus Versus Bacteria

Your doctor will decide if your illness is viral or bacterial. Here are a few examples:

- **cough**
 - viral: most coughs
 - bacterial: pertussis (whooping cough)
- **runny nose**
 - viral: most runny noses
 - bacterial: sinus infections
- **sore throat**
 - viral: most sore throats
 - bacterial: strep throat.

Coping With Your Cold

Listed below are some products that can help you cope with your cold. Read the package instructions. Call your doctor or pharmacist with any questions.

- cough drops:
 - use to soothe your sore throat and suppress your cough
- Tylenol® (acetaminophen):
 - use to relieve your aches and pains and to reduce your fever
- Robitussin-DM® (guaifenesin/dextromethorphan):
 - use to loosen phlegm in your lungs and suppress a dry cough
 - do not use if you have had a cough for a long time or a cough that will not stop
- Sudafed® (pseudoephedrine):
 - use to relieve sinus pressure and nasal congestion
 - do not use if you have high blood pressure, heart disease, glaucoma, thyroid disease, diabetes or an enlarged prostate
 - this can cause nervousness, insomnia or “the jitters”

(over)

What Else You Can Do

- Get lots of rest.
- Cover your cough with a tissue or use your sleeve if you don't have a tissue.
- Keep your hands clean. Wash your hands with soap and water or clean them with a waterless alcohol handrub.
- Call your doctor if your cold symptoms do not get better in 7 days or if they get worse.