

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What can I do to protect my child from antibiotic-resistant bacteria?

Use antibiotics only when your doctor has determined that they might be effective. Antibiotics will not cure most colds, coughs, sore throats, or runny noses. Children fight off colds on their own.

If mucus from the nose changes from clear to yellow or green, does this mean that my child needs an antibiotic?

Yellow or green mucus does not mean that your child has a bacterial infection. It is normal for the mucus to get thick and change color during a viral cold.

How do I know if my child has a viral or bacterial infection?

Ask your doctor. If you think that your child might need treatment, you should contact your doctor. But remember, colds are caused by viruses, and should not be treated with antibiotics.

**When your child is sick,
antibiotics are not always the
answer.**

South Carolina Careful Antibiotic Use (C.A.Use) Taskforce Members

- Association of Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)
- Blue Cross/Blue Shield of SC
- Children's Hospital of the Greenville Hospital System
- Companion Healthcare
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Associates and Practitioners—S.C. Chapter
- Parish Nurses
- SC Department of Health and Environmental Control
- SC Nurses Association
- SC Parent Teacher Association
- SC Pharmacy Association
- SC Primary Care Association
- SC Public Health Association
- USC College of Pharmacy

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Because *sometimes*
the **best** medicine
is **NO** medicine.

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the best medicine
is no medicine.**



**The South Carolina
Careful Antibiotic Use Taskforce**

Antibiotics are among the most powerful and important medicines known. When used properly they can save lives, but used improperly, they can actually harm your child. Antibiotics should not be used to treat viral infections.

Bacteria and Viruses

Two main types of germs—bacteria and viruses—cause most infections. In fact, viruses cause most coughs and sore throats and all colds. Bacterial infections can be cured by antibiotics, but common viral infections never are. Your child recovers from these common viral infections when the illness has run its course.

Resistant Bacteria

New strains of bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics. These bacteria are not killed by the antibiotic. Some of these resistant bacteria can only be treated in the hospital. And a few are already untreatable. The more antibiotics prescribed, the higher the chance that your child will be infected with resistant bacteria.



How Bacteria Become Resistant

Each time we take antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant ones may be left to grow and multiply. Repeated use and improper use of antibiotics are some of the main causes of the increase in resistant bacteria. These resistant bacteria can also be spread to others in the family and community.

You can protect your child from resistant bacteria.

Learn about the differences between bacterial and viral infections, and talk to your child's doctor about them. Understand that antibiotics should not be used for viral infections.

When are antibiotics needed, and when are they not needed?

This complicated question is best answered by your doctor, and the answer depends on the specific diagnosis. Here are a few examples:

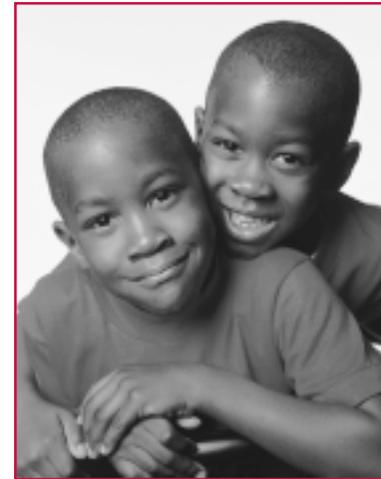
- **Ear infections:** There are several types. Most need antibiotics, but some do not.
- **Sinus infections:** Most children with thick or green mucus do not have sinus infections. Antibiotics are needed for some long-lasting or severe cases.
- **Cough or bronchitis:** Children rarely need antibiotics for bronchitis.

- **Sore throat:** Most cases are caused by viruses. Only one main kind, “strep throat,” requires antibiotics. This kind must be diagnosed by a laboratory test.
- **Colds:** Colds are caused by viruses and may sometimes last for 2 weeks or more. Antibiotics have no effect on colds, but your doctor may have suggestions for comfort measures while the illness runs its course.

The infection may change.

Viral infections may sometimes lead to bacterial infections. But treating viral infections with antibiotics to prevent bacterial infections does not work, and may lead to infection with resistant bacteria. Keep your doctor informed if

the illness gets worse or lasts a long time, so that proper treatment can be given, as needed.



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