

Can I stop taking antibiotics on my own when I feel better?

No. Please take your antibiotics exactly as your doctor's advice.

Even if you feel better, some of the bacteria that made you ill may still be in your body. Stopping antibiotic treatment at this juncture may provide opportunities for bacteria to evolve and develop **resistance**.



What are the consequences of the improper use of antibiotics?

Misuse or overuse of antibiotics accelerates the emergence and spread of **drug-resistant bacteria** ("superbugs"). While antibiotics can kill harmful bacteria in our body, they also kill normal bacteria, allowing superbugs to grow and multiply. When infections are caused by these drug-resistant bacteria, common antibiotics will **no longer work**, resulting in prolonged illness and increased risk of death.

What are the precautions when taking antibiotics?

You should enhance your personal hygiene to protect the health of you and your family when taking antibiotics:



Always keep hands clean



Only eat or drink thoroughly cooked and boiled items



Disinfect and cover all wounds



Wear a surgical mask if you have respiratory symptoms



Young children with symptoms of infection should minimise contact with other children

Follow your doctor's advice when taking antibiotics and do not stop taking antibiotics even if you are feeling better. Consult your doctor or pharmacist if in doubt.



Antimicrobial Resistance Thematic Webpage,
Department of Health

Produced in December 2025

MISUSE TODAY USELESS TOMORROW

ANTIBIOTICS cannot treat Cold or Flu



衛生防護中心
Centre for Health Protection



衛生署
Department of Health

What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are drugs that **treat bacterial infections**.

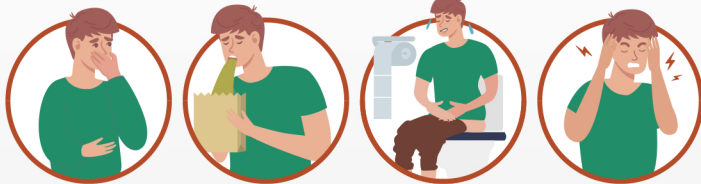
Antibiotics **cannot treat viral infections**, such as the common cold, influenza (flu) and Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).



What are the side effects of antibiotics?

Common side effects include **nausea, vomiting, constipation, diarrhea** and **headache**.

Some people may experience allergic reactions such as rash, itchiness or difficulty breathing. If you notice any of these symptoms, seek medical attention immediately.



Nausea

Vomiting

Constipation/
Diarrhea

Headache

Do I need antibiotics for colds or flu?

Cold and flu are caused by **viruses** and generally **do not** require antibiotic treatment. You should:

- ✓ **Take adequate rest** and **drink plenty of water**
- ✓ **Follow your doctor's advice** on the use of drugs
- ✓ **Do not** request antibiotics from your doctor
- ✓ **Do not** self-purchase antibiotics without a prescription



Are antibiotics "anti-inflammatory drugs"?



Antibiotics are not anti-inflammatory drugs. Anti-inflammatory drugs refer to medications, such as aspirin, which can reduce inflammation and relieve pain. Their actions are different from those of antibiotics. If you have any questions about the medication, consult your doctor.

Can I keep leftover antibiotics for future illnesses?

No. Antibiotics can only treat bacterial infections and are not effective against all illnesses. Antibiotics must be **prescribed by a doctor** with the appropriate choice, dosage and duration.



Can I share my antibiotics with others?

No. A **doctor's consultation** is needed to determine the type of infection one is suffering from, before considering if antibiotic treatment is indicated. Sometimes, additional investigations may be required to confirm a diagnosis.