

Using antibiotics wisely is everyone's responsibility

It's everyone's responsibility to use antibiotics responsibly. They are not effective against viral infections, including colds and flu. Antibiotic overuse is a serious problem and a potentially a threat to everyone's health. You should be guided by your GP or pharmacist as to whether or not you need an antibiotic.

How we can all help

[Antibiotic resistance](#) is a threat to human health and to medicines worldwide. Overuse and misuse of antibiotics could mean that in the future even the simplest infections cannot be treated and the most straightforward operations cannot be done.

This is an issue that affects every single one of us and could have devastating consequences. It is vital that we tackle this problem urgently so we can safeguard the health of ourselves, our children, and future generations.

Antibiotics should only be used for serious bacterial infections.

Some of the easy ways to help:

- practice good hand hygiene to help prevent the spread of infection in the first place – wash your hands after using the bathroom, before preparing or eating food, after coughing or sneezing, or if your hands are visibly dirty
- if you don't need antibiotics, for instance for [viral infections](#) like a cold or flu, don't take them
- speak to your GP or pharmacist before you ask for an antibiotic – don't demand antibiotics from your GP, they will make the decision on whether you need them or not
- if you're prescribed antibiotics, finish the course or medication (even if you start to feel better)
- never share antibiotics with anyone else

You can find more information about using antibiotics wisely at this link:

Colds or flu

If you have a cold or flu, antibiotics will not work. Most coughs, sore throats and earaches do not need antibiotics. Your body can usually fight these infections on its own.

Taking unnecessary antibiotics for conditions like these will contribute to them becoming less effective in being able to tackle the illnesses for which

they were developed.

The first place to get advice is from your pharmacist. There are things you can get over the counter to look after yourself during your illness and ease the symptoms until it passes.

If you're worried, contact your GP's surgery, who will be able to advise on the best treatment for you.

You can find useful information on the pages below:

Antibiotics and pets

If you own a pet, there are some useful tips to help use antibiotics responsibly:

- keep your pet healthy to help it fight infection – provide food with a high nutritional value, have it vaccinated regularly and if it gets sick take it to your vet immediately
- do not share antibiotics between pets or re-use tablets for an earlier illness – human medicines should not be given to pets as they could be dangerous and ineffective
- make sure that suspected disease is accurately diagnosed – consult your vet early
- not every condition needs to be treated with antibiotics so don't expect antibiotics from your vet as they may not be needed
- if your vet does prescribe antibiotics it will be after a clinical assessment and they will decide which antibiotic, at what dose and for how long is correct
- follow the advice given by your vet and use any antibiotics prescribed as instructed on the label
- complete the full course prescribed by your vet even if the animal gets better after a few doses
- always take your vet's advice and comply with instructions provided for the administration of and disposal of unused medication

Using antibiotics in agriculture

Antibiotics are essential medicines for treating bacterial infections in animals. Everyone [using antibiotics in agriculture](#) should make sure they are used responsibly to ensure they remain effective.

Livestock owners are urged to take every possible action to prevent disease by having good farm management, biosecurity, and animal husbandry. This will help reduce the need for antibiotics.

More useful links