

Antibiotics work by killing bacteria or stopping them from multiplying however they have no effect on viruses. It's therefore very important to know when to use antibiotics. Incorrect or excessive usage is harmful, so it is important to consult your doctor before giving them to your child.

When will a doctor prescribe antibiotics?

Using antibiotics to treat upper respiratory tract infections is inappropriate unless the infection is proven to be bacterial. Misuse of antibiotics, especially in children, will increase the risk of developing bacterial resistance, diarrhea, or a mild stomach upset.



Patient and Family Education

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Avoid antibiotics for viral sore throats



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What is a sore throat?

A sore throat is also called pharyngitis. It is a painful inflammation of the back part of the throat (pharynx) and can involve some or all of these: the back third of the tongue, the roof of the mouth, and the tonsils. The most common cause is an infection with a virus (80%) or bacteria. Viral infections don't need antibiotics.

Is a throat infection caused by a virus or bacteria?

Sore throats can be caused by bacteria but the most common causes are viruses. Viral causes are often accompanied by runny nose, cough, red or watery eyes, and sneezing.

Other causes of a sore throat include smoking, pollution or irritants in the air, allergies, and dry air.



How is a throat infection diagnosed?

The doctor will need to take your child's medical history and examine him/her. They will then advise the appropriate treatment and care for your child.

Throat infection treatment

A sore throat caused by a virus usually lasts four to five days and does not require treatment. Treatment to reduce pain may be helpful but will not help to get rid of the virus. Antibiotics do not improve throat pain caused by a virus and are not recommended unless the cause is bacterial.



How to protect your child from resistant bacteria?

- No overuse: Never take antibiotics to treat viral illnesses like colds or the flu.
- No misuse: When an antibiotics is prescribed, complete the course even if your child feels better. If not, some resistant bacteria may stay with him/ her and multiply, requiring a stronger antibiotic when the infection returns weeks later.
- Take antibiotics only in line with a doctor's instructions: don't take any which may be left over from an old prescription, given by friends or family, or purchased without a prescription.
- The best way to prevent infection and keep your child from getting sick is by washing hands thoroughly. Also wash fruit and vegetables and avoid raw eggs and undercooked meats.
- Keep immunizations up-to-date-especially for influenza and pneumonia.