

Your Health Checklist: Antibiotics

You take antibiotics to fight against bacterial infections. But remember it's important to use antibiotics only when you need them. Follow this checklist to make sure you are taking antibiotics safely.

DO: Take antibiotics for bacterial infections only. Examples include: a Urinary Tract Infection or UTI, Strep Throat, Bacterial pneumonia, and skin infections. DO: Take them exactly as directed by your healthcare provider. DO: Finish the entire prescription unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise. It may be tempting to stop taking your prescription as soon as you feel better. But you need to finish it to get rid of the infection completely.

DO: Trust your healthcare provider to prescribe antibiotics only when needed. DO: Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist about ways to feel better when you're sick if an antibiotic isn't needed. Sometimes, the best treatment when you're sick may be over-the-counter medication.

If you experience side effects such as a rash or trouble breathing: DO: Tell your healthcare provider or pharmacist and stop taking the antibiotic.

Do Not: Take antibiotics for viruses such as the common cold and flu. They will not help treat these viruses. Do Not: Ask or demand antibiotics from your healthcare provider. Taking antibiotics when they're not needed won't help you, can cause side effects or allergic reactions such as a rash or nausea, and possibly affect the way your immune system works.

Do Not: Share your antibiotics with loved ones or take medications prescribed for someone else. This may delay the best treatment for you, make you even more sick or cause side effects.

Do Not: Save your antibiotics for later. Talk to your pharmacist about safely getting rid of leftover medications.

Do Not: Drink alcohol when you're taking antibiotics. Mixing alcohol with antibiotics can delay the time it takes you to feel better and cause side effects such as stomach upset, dizziness and drowsiness.

Talk to your healthcare provider or pharmacist if you have any questions about antibiotic use. Follow this checklist for the safest ways to use antibiotics.