



Does My Child Need an Antibiotic?



Overview

When your child is sick, you want to help them get better. Many parents may think antibiotics are the way to go. But they aren't always right for your child. Let's take a few minutes to learn more.

What are antibiotics?

First, what are antibiotics? They're powerful drugs that kill bacteria. We use them to fight a wide range of bacterial infections. But they don't work against viruses, and that's important. Why? Because common colds, many sore throats and many lung infections (including the flu) are caused by viruses. If your child has a virus, an antibiotic won't help.

Overuse

Another thing to consider is "antibiotic overuse." Every time we use an antibiotic, we give bacteria a chance to build up resistance to it. Over time, the antibiotic may stop working. So we don't like to use these drugs when we can try other things first. Instead of antibiotics, your doctor may suggest things like rest, fluids and over-the-counter medicines.

Risks

And finally, know that antibiotics do have risks. They're powerful drugs. They can interact with other medicines. And, your child can be allergic to them. Antibiotic use can lead to diarrhea. It can lead to injuries of the liver and kidneys. So if your child does need to take an antibiotic, follow your doctor's care plan. For more info, talk to your doctor.