

Taking Antibiotics: Your Daily Guide

Pharmacology · Drug Classes & Mechanisms

Antibiotics kill bacteria, the germs that cause some infections. Taking them the right way helps you get well and keeps antibiotics working in the future.

Take every dose

- Take each dose at the same times every day, spaced evenly.
- Take all of it, even when you feel better, unless your provider tells you to stop.
- Missed a dose? Ask your pharmacist. **Never take 2 doses at once.**

Follow the label

- Take it with or without food, as the label says.
- Some antibiotics, such as doxycycline and ciprofloxacin, do not mix with milk, antacids (Tums, Maalox), iron, or calcium. Take them 2 hours before or 6 hours after these.
- Some antibiotics make birth control pills work less well. Ask your pharmacist if you need a backup method, such as condoms.

Use antibiotics only when needed

- Antibiotics do not treat colds or flu.
- Never save, share, or take leftover antibiotics.

Know common side effects

- Upset stomach or loose stools
- Vaginal itching or thick white discharge (yeast infection)

- Sunburn more easily with some antibiotics. Use sunscreen.

Watch for C. diff

- C. diff is a serious bowel infection that sometimes follows antibiotics, even weeks later.
- Do not take diarrhea medicine, such as loperamide (Imodium), unless your provider says so.

Call your provider today if you have

- 3 or more watery stools in a day, belly cramps, or fever
- A new rash or itching: call before your next dose
- Tendon or heel pain
- No improvement in 2 to 3 days, or you feel worse

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Hives with trouble breathing
- Swelling of your face, lips, tongue, or throat
- A rash with blisters, peeling skin, or mouth sores, with fever
- Fainting

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: ncllexpace.com/patient-education/taking-antibiotics-correctly/patient

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