

# WHEN ANTIBIOTICS ARE NEEDED

Antibiotics are needed for serious bacterial infections including:

- Sepsis
- Pneumonia
- Urinary tract infections
- Sexually transmitted infections like gonorrhoea
- Meningococcal meningitis

If you're worried, speak to a doctor who will be able to advise you on the best treatment for your symptoms.

Remember never share antibiotics or keep for later use. For more information on antibiotics visit [www.nhs.uk/keepantibioticsworking](http://www.nhs.uk/keepantibioticsworking)



Become an Antibiotic Guardian and protect yourself, your family and friends against the spread of antibiotic resistance.

Join us at [antibioticguardian.com](http://antibioticguardian.com)



Public Health  
England



## Taking ANTIBIOTICS when you don't need them puts you and your family at risk



Taking antibiotics encourages harmful bacteria that live inside you to become resistant. That means that antibiotics may not work when you really need them. This puts you and your family at risk of a more severe or longer illness.

**Take your doctor or nurse's advice when it comes to antibiotics.**

Keep  Working



No one likes being sick and it's especially upsetting when your child is ill.

## REMEMBER IF YOU'RE FEELING UNWELL ANTIBIOTICS AREN'T ALWAYS NEEDED

### How to look after yourself and your family:

If you or a family member are feeling unwell, have a cold or flu and you haven't been prescribed antibiotics, here are some effective self-care ways to help you feel better:

- **Ask your pharmacist to recommend medicines to help with symptoms or pain.**
- Get plenty of rest.
- Make sure you or your child drink enough to avoid feeling thirsty.
- Fever is a sign the body is fighting the infection and usually gets better by itself in most cases. You can use paracetamol if you or your child are uncomfortable as a result of a fever.
- Make sure to use a tissue for your nose and wash your hands frequently to avoid spreading your infection to family and friends.

### How long should my symptoms last for?

Here are a few guidelines to help you judge how long some common illnesses and symptoms should last for:

Common illnesses	Most people are better by
Earache (middle ear infection)	8 days
Sore throat	7–8 days
Sinusitis (adults only)	14–21 days
Cold	14 days
Cough or bronchitis	21 days

If you're not starting to improve by these guide times, contact your GP or call NHS 111.

### These symptoms are possible signs of serious illness and should be assessed urgently:

1. If your skin is very cold or has a strange colour, or you develop an unusual rash.
2. If you feel confused or have slurred speech or are very drowsy.
3. If you have difficulty breathing. Signs can include:
  - breathing quickly
  - turning blue around the lips and the skin below the mouth
  - skin between or above the ribs getting sucked or pulled in with every breath.
4. If you develop a severe headache and are sick.
5. If you develop chest pain.
6. If you have difficulty swallowing or are drooling.
7. If you cough up blood.
8. If you are feeling a lot worse.

**If you or your child has any of these symptoms, are getting worse or are sicker than you would expect (even if your/their temperature falls), trust your instincts and seek medical advice urgently from NHS 111 or your GP. If a child under the age of 5 has any of symptoms 1–3, go to A&E immediately or call 999.**