



Cough decision aid for children

This decision aid can help you be a part of the shared decision making process with your healthcare clinician for whether to use antibiotics when your child has a cough.

Is my cough an infection?

A cough can be caused by an infection in the airway leading to the lungs that causes mucus production.



What causes a cough?

A cough can be due to allergies or other causes.

>90% OF COUGHS ARE CAUSED BY VIRUSES

Treatment options

1. Active monitoring with symptom relief treatment

- Use symptom relief treatment options
- Use pain and fever reducers as needed
- Let the body fight the infection naturally

2. Antibiotics with symptom relief treatment

- Use pain and fever reducers as needed
- Use symptom relief treatment options
- Take prescription antibiotics as prescribed if bacterial infection indicated

How do children feel after 1-2 weeks?

(Important note: The cough may persist for more than 3 weeks with or without antibiotics, even after other symptoms improve.)



7 OUT OF 10 CHILDREN
FEEL BETTER *WITH* ANTIBIOTICS



5 OUT OF 10 CHILDREN
FEEL BETTER *WITHOUT* ANTIBIOTICS

Why might antibiotics be used?

- If you have an infection caused by bacteria, your healthcare clinician may prescribe an antibiotic. If so, you should take the antibiotic as directed.

Why might antibiotics *not* be used?

- If you have an infection caused by a virus, an antibiotic won't help and may make you feel worse.



Bacteria

✓ **Yes** antibiotic



Virus

✗ **No** antibiotic

- Antibiotics can cause side effects like diarrhea, rash, nausea, dizziness, belly pain, yeast infections or allergic reactions which can sometimes be serious.



Diarrhea



Rash



Nausea



Dizziness

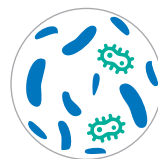


Yeast infection

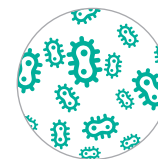


1 in 4 children have side effects on antibiotics

What is antibiotic resistance?



Bacteria, not the body, develop the ability to defeat the antibiotics designed to kill them.



When bacteria become resistant, antibiotics cannot fight them and the bacteria multiply.



Some resistant bacteria can be harder to treat and can spread to other people.



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Symptom management prescription pad

Diagnosis

- Cold or cough
- Middle ear fluid
- Flu (influenza)
- Other _____
- Viral sore throat
- Bronchitis/bronchiolitis
- Sinusitis

Over-the-counter medications that may help

- Fever or aches _____
- Ear pain _____
- Sore throat _____
- Nasal congestion _____
- Cough/chest congestion _____

Always use medicines according to the package instructions or as directed by your clinician.

Symptom relief treatment options

- Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil) as directed
- Saline nasal spray
- Humid air (cool mist humidifier or steamy shower)
- Warm compress over sinuses — ear or bridge of the nose
- Raise the head of your child’s bed for children over 2 years of age
- Rubber suction bulb to remove nasal secretions for babies and younger children
- Get plenty of extra fluids. For children over 1 year old, provide water, popsicles, icy treats
- Honey for children over 1 year old
- Throat lozenges or ice for children over 4 years of age
- Gargle with warm salt water (mix ¼ teaspoon salt per 1 cup of warm water)
- Rest
- _____
- _____

Watchful waiting plan

Your healthcare professional believes your child’s illness will likely go away on its own in the next _____ days/hours. If your child feels better, no further action is necessary and no antibiotics are needed. In the meantime, follow your healthcare professional’s recommendations below to help your child feel better.

Follow-up

- If not improved in _____ days/hours or if new symptoms occur or if you have other concerns, please call or return to the office for a recheck.
- If not improved in _____ days/hours, please fill the prescription provided.
- Other _____



When to call the clinician or seek further care

- If symptoms get worse
- If symptoms do not improve
- If you have further questions

If a medical emergency arises, call 911, immediately.

1. Gerber JS, et al. Association of Broad- vs Narrow-Spectrum Antibiotics With Treatment Failure, Adverse Events, and Quality of Life in Children With Acute Respiratory Tract Infections. JAMA. 2017;318:2325-36. 2. Jenkins T.C., et al. Interventions to de-implement unnecessary antibiotic prescribing for ear infections (DISAPPEAR Trial): protocol for a cluster-randomized trial. BMC Infect Dis 24, 126 (2024). <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/> 3. Kinkade S, et al. Acute Bronchitis. Am Fam Physician. 2016 Oct 1;94(7):560-565. PMID: 27929206. 4. Smith SM, et al. Antibiotics for acute bronchitis. Cochrane Database Syst. Rev. 2017; 6(6):CD000245. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD000245.pub4.