

Think your child needs antibiotics? “Think again,” says Consumer Reports.

If your child has an earache, sore throat, or stuffy nose, it's normal to want something to make him feel better, fast. But antibiotics often aren't the answer.

Taking antibiotics when they aren't needed can cause dangerous side effects. It can also increase the chance that the drugs won't work for your child, and other children, when they really are needed.

Sometimes though, your child really does need antibiotics. If this is the case, make sure to follow your pediatrician's instructions completely.

To make sure your child only uses antibiotics when they really are needed, Consumer Reports says:

- ▶ Be patient. Symptoms often go away in a few days.
- ▶ Don't push for antibiotics if they're not really needed. If your pediatrician prescribes the drugs, ask why.
- ▶ Help your child stay healthy with current vaccinations, frequent hand washing, plenty of rest, and a healthy diet.

Read below to learn more:

Sore Throat, Cough, Runny Nose –

Consider antibiotics for:

- Strep throat or another bacterial infection that your pediatrician diagnosed.
- A cough that doesn't get better in 2 weeks.
- Yellow-green discharge from the nose and a fever of at least 102°F for several days in a row.

Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Ear Infections –

Consider antibiotics for:

- Babies 6 months and younger with a diagnosed ear infection.
- Children 6 months to 2 years with severe ear pain, who may tug at their ears or be irritable.
- Children age 2 or older with a fever of 102.2°F or higher.

Recommended by the American Academy of Family Physicians

Pink Eye –

Consider antibiotics for:

- Pink eye that doesn't get better in one week.
- A pus-like eye discharge that lasts all day and may be yellow-green.
- A child with a weak immune system.

Recommended by the American Academy of Ophthalmology

Sinus Infections –

Consider antibiotics for:

- A fever over 102°F.
- Pain and tenderness around the sinuses.
- Symptoms that do not get better in 10 days.
- A child who gets better and then worse again.

Recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics

Ear Infections for Children with Ear Tubes –

Consider antibiotics for:

- A child who doesn't get better with over the counter ear drops. (Check with your pediatrician before using ear drops.)
- A very ill child.
- A child who needs antibiotics for another reason.

Recommended by the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery

Swimmer's Ear –

Consider oral antibiotics if:

- Your child's infection spreads or doesn't get better with prescription antibiotic ear drops or over-the-counter alcohol-based ear drops.
- Your child has other conditions that increase the risk of complications.

Recommended by the American Academy of Otolaryngology – Head & Neck Surgery

Ask your pediatrician if your child really needs antibiotics, what the risks are, and if there are any other options.