

You may not need antibiotics for your skin

If your skin is red, swollen, or tender, you might think it's infected. But that isn't always true. And antibiotics aren't always a good idea.

Antibiotics can be harmful if you take them when you don't need them. The more antibiotics you use, the less likely they are to work when you need them.

You may not need antibiotics for some skin problems. Ask your doctor if there is another treatment you can try instead.

Antibiotics aren't needed if:



Your skin is not infected. Eczema causes red, itchy, and scaly skin. You may have a lot of bacteria on your skin. But that doesn't mean it's infected. Antibiotics don't help your itching or redness. And they don't make your eczema less severe.



You have inflamed cysts. Swollen, red, and tender lumps under the skin are usually either inflamed cysts or small boils. You likely don't need antibiotics for either of these problems.



You have a surgical wound. After surgery, the risk of an infection is fairly low. And antibiotic creams and ointments don't lower your risk of infection.



Your lower legs are swollen and red. In most cases, if both of your lower legs are swollen and red at the same time, it's not because of an infection. That means you don't need antibiotics. Your doctor should talk to you and rule out other problems. For instance, you could have a blood clot in your leg or an allergy to something you touched.

When do you need antibiotics for your skin?

Talk to your doctor if you have signs of a skin infection, such as:

- > Bumps filled with pus
- > Cracks and sores that ooze pus
- > Crusts the color of honey
- > Fever, with possible sweats or chills
- > Very red or unusually warm skin with other signs of infection
- > Wound that is red, painful, swollen, or warm
- > Wound that oozes pus or has yellow crusts

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