

What you need to know: Antibiotics, Bacteria and Viruses

How are bacteria and viruses the same?

- Both are germs that can make you sick
- Both can make you a little sick or very sick
- Both can last from a few days to weeks
- Both can make you have a cough, runny nose, fever, sore throat or loose stools
- Both can give you green or yellow mucus from your nose or coughing. This means your body is fighting your illness

How are bacteria and viruses not the same?

Most common infections are caused by viruses, such as:

- “Cold”
- Sore throat
- Sinus infections
- Chest cold
- Bronchitis
- Flu (Influenza)

Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria. They can only treat sickness caused by bacteria. They do not kill viruses

What happens if I take antibiotics when I don't need them?

- The side effects of antibiotics can make you sicker, such as:
 - Diarrhea
 - Nausea and vomiting
 - Allergic reaction – swelling of your face and throat, trouble breathing
 - Rash
- Your sickness can last longer
- Bacteria that live in your body can change. Bacteria can be harder to kill the next time you get sick

How can I feel better?

- We can help with your symptoms
- Talk with your doctor to learn more

See your doctor if you have any of these

- Short of breath
- Chest pain
- Shaking chills
- Fever of 102 or more with other symptoms
- Coughing up blood (more than a streak)
- Getting better and then getting worse

Approved by Atrium Health Antibiotic Stewardship Committee, Fall 2018

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ATENCIÓN: si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1- 800-821-1535.

CHÚ Ý: Nếu bạn nói Tiếng Việt, có các dịch vụ hỗ trợ ngôn ngữ miễn phí dành cho bạn. Gọi số 1- 800-821-1535.

