

General advice about antibiotics

This leaflet gives general information about giving antibiotics to children. Leaflets on individual antibiotics are available on www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk.



This leaflet is for parents and carers about how to use these medicines in children. Our information sometimes differs from that provided by the manufacturers, because their information is usually aimed at adults. Please read this leaflet carefully. Keep it somewhere safe so that you can read it again.

If your child has ever had a reaction to any medicine, tell your doctor **before** giving the antibiotic.


Why is it important for my child to take an antibiotic?

If your child is prescribed an antibiotic, it is important that they take this medicine so that it kills the harmful bacteria and gets rid of, or prevents, the infection.

How much should I give, and when should I give it?

Your doctor will work out the amount of medicine (the dose) that is right for your child. The dose will be shown on the medicine label.

Your doctor or pharmacist will also tell you how often you need to give the medicine.

 **It is important that you follow your doctor's instructions about how much to give.**

What if I forget to give it or give too much?

Antibiotics work best when given regularly. They are unlikely to cause any problems if you give an extra dose by mistake.

Detailed information about what to do if you forget to give an antibiotic or give too much is available on the individual medicines leaflets for each antibiotic on the Medicines for Children website www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk

If you are concerned that you have forgotten to give several doses or have given your child too much, contact your doctor or local NHS services (details at end of leaflet). Have the medicine or packaging with you if you telephone for advice.

Can other medicines be given at the same time?


- You can give your child medicines that contain paracetamol, unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Some antibiotics should not be taken with some other medicines that you get on prescription. Check with your doctor or pharmacist **before** giving any other medicines to your child. This includes herbal and complementary medicines, and some medicines that you can buy over the counter.

General advice about antibiotics

- Children are sometimes sick (vomit) or get diarrhoea when taking antibiotics. Encourage them to drink water to replace the fluid they have lost. If it is severe or your child is drowsy, floppy or does not respond, contact your doctor, local NHS services (details at end of leaflet) or take your child to hospital.
- **Do not** give your child any medicine to stop the diarrhoea unless your doctor has told you to.
- Try to give the medicine at about the same times each day, to help you remember, and to make sure that there is the right amount of medicine in your child's body to kill the bacteria.
- Only give this medicine to your child for their current infection.
- **Never save** medicine for future illnesses. Return any unused medicine to your pharmacist.
- Only give the antibiotic to the child for whom it was prescribed. Never give it to anyone else, even if their condition appears to be the same, as this could do harm.

Preventing antibiotic resistance

- It is important that your child completes the course of antibiotic. This means that they must take the medicine for the number of days that the doctor has told you to, or until all the medicine has been taken. If you stop giving the antibiotic too soon, bacteria that are left may start to multiply again, and may cause another infection.
- In the past, doctors may have prescribed antibiotics for many types of infection. However, this practice is now changing with growing concern about the risk of antibiotic resistance.
- Bacteria that become "resistant" to a common antibiotic are no longer killed by it, and infections may become harder to treat. It is therefore important that antibiotics are used only when needed.
- Many common illnesses, such as sore throats, colds, coughs and flu, are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not kill viruses, so your doctor will not prescribe antibiotics for these illnesses.
- Antibiotics do not always shorten the duration of an infection. Most children can fight mild infection such as ear infection or tonsillitis. It is now recommended that doctors do not prescribe antibiotics if they think the infection will get better on its own. You can give your child medicines such as paracetamol to help with symptoms while their immune system fights the infection.
- It should be remembered that antibiotics can cause side-effects or allergic reactions. Your doctor will consider the benefits and risks of the illness and its treatment when deciding whether to prescribe an antibiotic.

 **If you think someone else may have taken the medicine by accident, contact your doctor for advice.**

Where should I keep the antibiotic?

- Keep medicines in a cupboard, away from heat and direct sunlight.
- You may need to keep liquid medicines in the fridge - check the instructions on the bottle. Make sure the medicine does not freeze.
- Make sure that children cannot see or reach the medicine.
- Keep the medicine in the container it came in.

Who to contact for more information

Your child's doctor, pharmacist or nurse will be able to give you more information about your child's antibiotic.

You can also get useful information from:

England: NHS 111

Tel 111

www.nhs.uk

Scotland: NHS 24

Tel 111

www.nhs24.scot

Wales: NHS Direct

Tel 0845 46 47 (2p per minute) or 111 (free)

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Northern Ireland: NI Direct

www.nidirect.gov.uk

www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk



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The primary source for the information in this leaflet is the British National Formulary for Children. For details on any other sources used for this leaflet, please contact us through our website, www.medicinesforchildren.org.uk. We take great care to make sure that the information in this leaflet is correct and up-to-date. However, medicines can be used in different ways for different patients. It is important that you ask the advice of your doctor or pharmacist if you are not sure about something. This leaflet is about the use of these medicines in the UK, and may not apply to other countries. The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), the Neonatal and Paediatric Pharmacists Group (NPPG), WellChild and the contributors and editors cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of information, omissions of information, or any actions that may be taken as a consequence of reading this leaflet.