

What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are drugs that fight infections caused by bacteria, not viruses.

What are antibiotic resistant organisms?

Antibiotic resistance is the ability of bacteria to resist the effects of an antibiotic. Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in some way that reduces or stops the effectiveness of drugs, chemicals, or other agents designed to cure or prevent infections. The bacteria survive and continue to multiply causing more harm.

How do antibiotic resistant organisms develop?

Antibiotic use promotes development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Every time a person takes antibiotics, sensitive bacteria are killed, but resistant germs may be left to grow and multiply. Repeated and improper uses of antibiotics are primary causes of the increase in drug-resistant bacteria.

What type of health problems are caused by antibiotic resistant organisms?

Infections caused by resistant microorganisms often fail to respond to the standard treatment, resulting in longer illnesses, higher healthcare costs and a greater risk of death. Someone with an infection that is resistant to a certain medicine can pass that resistant infection to another person. A hard-to-treat illness can be spread from person to person,

and in some cases, can lead to serious disability or even death.

Who is most at risk?

Antibiotic resistance can cause significant danger and suffering for children and adults who have common infections, once easily treatable with antibiotics.

How can antibiotic resistant organisms be prevented?

It is important to understand that antibiotics designed for bacterial infections are not useful for viral infections such as a cold, cough, or the flu. Follow these simple steps to help reduce antibiotic resistance:

- Ask your healthcare provider whether an antibiotic is likely to be beneficial for your illness.
- Ask what else you can do to feel better sooner.
- Do not take an antibiotic for a viral infection like a cold or the flu.
- Do not save some of your antibiotic for the next time you get sick. Discard any leftover medication once you have completed your prescribed course of treatment.
- Take an antibiotic exactly as the healthcare provider tells you. Do not skip doses. Complete the prescribed course of treatment even if you are feeling better. If treatment stops too soon, some bacteria may survive and re-infect.

- Do not take antibiotics prescribed for someone else. The antibiotic may not be appropriate for your illness. Taking the wrong medicine may delay correct treatment and allow bacteria to multiply.
- If your healthcare provider determines that you do not have a bacterial infection, ask about ways to help relieve your symptoms. Do not pressure your provider to prescribe an antibiotic.

Where can I get more information?

- Your personal healthcare provider
- Utah Department of Health, Bureau of Epidemiology, 801-538-6191
- [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention](#)

