

Viruses versus bacteria

Basically, there are two main types of germs that cause most infections. These are viruses and bacteria.

Viruses	Bacteria
<i>Viruses cause:</i>	<i>Bacteria cause:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All colds and flu• Most coughs• Most sore throats	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Most ear infections• Some sinus infections• Strep throat• Urinary tract infections
Antibiotics cannot kill viruses	Antibiotics do kill specific bacteria

Drug-resistant bacteria

Each time you take an antibiotic, bacteria are killed. Sometimes bacteria may be resistant or become resistant. Resistant bacteria do not respond to the antibiotics and continue to cause infection.

Each time you take an antibiotic unnecessarily or improperly, you increase your chance of developing drug-resistant bacteria. So it is really important to take antibiotics only when necessary. Because of these resistant bacteria, some diseases that used to be easy to treat are now becoming nearly impossible to treat.

What do you need to know about antibiotics?

- Remember that antibiotics don't work against colds and flu, and that unnecessary antibiotics can be harmful.
- Talk to your health care provider about antibiotics and find out about the differences between viruses and bacteria --and when antibiotics should and shouldn't be used.
- If you do get an antibiotic, be sure to take it exactly as prescribed--that may help decrease the development of resistant bacteria.
- Antibiotic resistance is particularly dangerous for children, but it can occur in adults as well.

One final note is that taking antibiotics appropriately and getting immunized will help prevent having to take more dangerous and more costly medications. If we use antibiotics appropriately we can avoid developing drug resistance. We just need to take our medicine exactly as it is prescribed and not expect to take antibiotics every time we're sick.