

# What's your "antibiotic IQ"?



In just a few short weeks, it's going to be cold season again in Minnesota.

What should you do when the cold or flu bug hits you...or your kids? Should you ask your doctor to "give you something for it?" Or is that *not* such a good idea?

## **True or False:**

1. Antibiotics will zap a nasty cold – or a bad case of the flu – in short order.
2. Antibiotics are good for treating strep throat.
3. Antibiotics won't help if you have a chest cold – but you'll need them if you have acute bronchitis.
4. If you have green or yellow drainage, your illness is caused by bacteria – not a virus.
5. It doesn't matter if your child is sick with a virus or some kind of bacteria. You'll want an antibiotic, all the same.
6. It never does any harm to take an antibiotic – even if your illness isn't caused by bacteria, and it won't make you better.
7. You can stop taking an antibiotic as soon as you feel better – and save the leftover antibiotics for the next time you're sick.
8. It's no big deal if a few bacteria become resistant to some kinds of antibiotics – there's always something else you can take.

# Answers:

1. **FALSE.** Diseases can be caused by different kinds of germs. Some are caused by bacteria, and others are caused by viruses. Anti-bacterial drugs – or antibiotics – will help fight diseases caused by bacteria, but they don't work with viruses. Because colds and flu are caused by viruses, antibiotics won't help with those diseases.
2. **TRUE.** Most sore throats are caused by viruses, but strep throat is caused by bacteria. If your doctor does a test, and your child has strep throat, it will need to be treated with an antibiotic.
3. **FALSE.** "Acute bronchitis" and "chest cold" are two different names for the same illness. The illness is caused by a virus, so antibiotics won't help.
4. **FALSE.** Nasal drainage helps wash away the virus that's making you sick. At first it will be clear, but then it will get thicker, and the color will change to white, yellow, or green. But that doesn't mean you need an antibiotic!
5. **FALSE.** An antibiotic won't help if your child has a virus. And if you misuse antibiotics, people in your family may be sick more often – and more seriously ill when they do get sick!
6. **FALSE.** By misusing antibiotics, you could also be helping to breed "super bugs" – "resistant" bacteria that are not killed by antibiotics. Antibiotics are one of our most important weapons in the fight against disease. We can't afford to undermine their effectiveness.
7. **FALSE.** You need to finish taking all of the antibiotics your doctor gave you – even if you already feel better. You need to kill off all of the germs that made you sick. If you try to use "leftovers," you may not be using the right antibiotic for your illness – and if you're using them for a virus, they won't work at all.
8. **FALSE.** Don't count on being able to use "something else" if a "super bug" makes you sick. We only have a limited number of antibiotics available. And often, "super bugs" have to be treated with stronger antibiotics. These stronger drugs may have more side effects – and you may have to stay in the hospital, and have them given through a vein!

**Antibiotics are an important weapon in the fight  
against disease. Help us keep them working.  
Always let your doctor decide if you need an antibiotic.**

Minnesota  
Antibiotic  
Resistance  
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