

Patient information

Antibiotics



Remember these key points

Antibiotics DO NOT work for a case of the common cold or 'flu

Be clear on the nature of your allergies

Complete the course prescribed

Use antibiotics responsibly - Misuse of antibiotics causes bacteria to become resistant to the antibiotic. So when you need antibiotics in the future they may no longer work.

This patient information leaflet provides general information about antibiotics that have been prescribed for you on discharge from hospital or as an outpatient from a clinic. This leaflet includes the following key sections:

- What are antibiotics?
- When should antibiotics be used?
- How long should I take my antibiotic(s)?
- Will I have side effects from my antibiotic(s)?
- Allergies
- Special care
- What should I do with any unwanted antibiotics?

The antibiotic(s) prescribed by your doctor on discharge have been clinically verified by a Clinical Pharmacist. This means that the following has been

confirmed to be safe and appropriate:

- Choice of antibiotic
- Dose and frequency
- The duration of treatment
- Safe to take with your current medications
- Safe with your allergy history

What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are a group of medicines that are used to treat infections caused by bacteria. They work by either killing bacteria or preventing their growth.

Different types of antibiotics are used to treat different kinds of infection. In the UK, most antibiotics are only available on prescription from a Doctor or a Dentist.

If you have been admitted to hospital with a severe infection then you may have had antibiotics into a vein (intravenous) or into the muscle (intramuscular). After 48 - 72 hours your antibiotic may be changed to antibiotics given by mouth. These can be given as a tablet, capsule or liquid.

Antibiotics are also available as creams, ointments, or lotions to apply to the skin to treat certain skin infections.

When should antibiotics be used?

It is important to remember that antibiotics only work against infections that are caused by bacteria and certain parasites. They do not work against infections that are caused by viruses (for example, the common cold or flu), or fungal infections (for example, thrush in the mouth or vagina).

If you are having an operation, you may be given antibiotics to prevent an infection. This is known as prophylaxis and is especially common before certain types of surgery where there is a high risk of infection.

How long should I take my antibiotic(s)?

You should complete the entire treatment course even if you start to feel better. If

you stop before the course is complete this could encourage the bacteria to develop resistance to that antibiotic, making your infection more difficult to treat.

Do not use or take prescription-only antibiotics if they have been obtained from anywhere other than a Pharmacist or other healthcare professional (for example, prescription-only antibiotics bought online without a prescription). Do not take or give prescribed antibiotics to others.

Will I have side effects from my antibiotic(s)?

As with any medicine there is a possibility for side effects to occur, but they may not occur in every patient. A list of side effects is provided within the patient information leaflet with your antibiotics. The likelihood of these side effects occurring can be discussed with a Pharmacist either at the hospital or at your local community Pharmacy.

The most common side-effects with antibiotics are diarrhoea, nausea and vomiting. If diarrhoea is very severe, talk to your doctor, pharmacist or nurse.

If you have any concerns regarding a potential side effect then please consult with a Pharmacist or GP for advice.

Allergies

Some people can be allergic to antibiotics, particularly penicillin and similar antibiotics such as cephalosporins, and may experience side effects such as:

- a rash
- swelling of the face and tongue
- difficulty breathing

If these symptoms rapidly progress and become worse this is called an anaphylactic reaction and it can be serious or even fatal.

Always tell your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have had an allergic reaction to an antibiotic and remind them of your allergy before you receive any antibiotics.

Special care

You should speak to a healthcare professional if you have any of the following

before taking an antibiotic:

- If you know you have any liver or kidney problems
- If you are pregnant or breastfeeding
- If you have had *Clostridium difficile* diarrhoea (*C.diff*) in the past

What should I do with any unwanted antibiotic(s)?

If you have any unwanted antibiotics, please return them to a local community Pharmacy or a hospital Pharmacy for safe disposal.

You should **NOT**:

- Keep them for another time
- Share prescription-only antibiotics with anyone other than the person they were prescribed or supplied for
- Flush them down toilets or sinks
- Use these antibiotics for animals (or use animal antibiotics for yourself)

For more information

If you have any questions regarding your antibiotics then please feel free to contact the Pharmacy department's Medicines Information Service at West Suffolk Hospital. You will be able to discuss any concerns with a Clinical Pharmacist.

Telephone number for Medicines Information

01284 713109

You can also visit the following websites, which discuss antibiotics and the importance of using them responsibly:

<https://patient.info/health/antibiotics-leaflet>

<http://antibioticguardian.com/>

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