

# How Antibiotics Can Cause More Harm Than Good

Antibiotics are strong drugs that fight infections. Overuse of these drugs can cause problems, and they should only be used when needed.

## 1. Side effects

Sometimes antibiotics can:

- Lead to a **drug interaction** with other medications
- Cause **nausea** or **vomiting**
- Cause a painful, highly contagious **diarrhea** that results from the bacteria *Clostridioides difficile* ("C.diff")
- Cause **rashes** or **allergic reactions**
- Harm your **kidneys** or **other organs**

## 2. Antibiotic Resistance

- The overuse of antibiotics has contributed to an **increase in the ability of the bacteria to resist** the effect of antibiotics
- When resistance occurs, there may be fewer good antibiotic options to **treat your future infections**

Understanding the risks of using antibiotics when not needed leads to good, safe care.

# What You Can Do to Help

Whenever you are prescribed antibiotics, make sure you understand why you need them.

Here are some questions for you or your loved one to ask your doctor:

- Why do I need antibiotics?
- What are common side effects?
- When should I stop the medication?
- What I do if I do not feel better in a few days?

.....

### Other Resources For You:

<https://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use/uti.html>

\*This brochure was adapted from the work of the Massachusetts Coalition for the Prevention of Medical Errors

# Worried About a Urinary Tract Infection?



Learn about when an antibiotic is and is not needed.



CENTER FOR  
STEWARDSHIP  
IN MEDICINE



CENTER FOR  
STEWARDSHIP  
IN MEDICINE

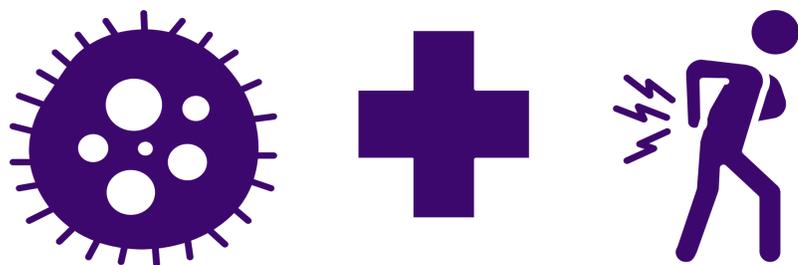
## Did You Know That...

Bacteria in the urine is common! As many as 15% of people aged 65-80 and 50% of people older than 80 years have bacteria in their urine, **without actually having a UTI**. These people do not need antibiotics.



## How is a urinary tract infection diagnosed?

Requires **both** findings of bacteria in the urine **and** the presence of specific signs and symptoms of a UTI.



Having both is important, because bacteria can and do live naturally in the bladder without causing any pain or symptoms. This is commonly referred to as **asymptomatic bacteriuria**.

If you or someone you know is concerned about a UTI, see if any specific symptoms are present:



**A burning feeling, discomfort or pain with urination**



**Pain the the lower abdomen or back**



**Increase in frequency (needing to urinate more often than usual).**



**Repeated strong urges to urinate**



**Blood in the urine**

These symptoms may or may not be accompanied by fever.

## What about other symptoms, such as confusion or sudden change in behavior?

UTI is less likely without the specific symptoms previously listed.

Non-specific symptoms such as confusion, a sudden change in behavior, fatigue, or a fall may be caused by other factors, including:

- Dehydration
- Depression
- Inadequate nutrition
- Medication side effects
- Poor sleep
- Constipation

