

Iowa Gets Smart Know When Antibiotics Work

What should you do if your child becomes sick with a cold, influenza or strep throat?

Pre-survey

1. Antibiotics will kill viruses that cause colds and influenza. **T F**
2. Antibiotics are good for treating strep throat. **T F**
3. Viruses cause most sore throats, earaches and colds. **T F**
4. If your child coughs up yellow or green stuff, the illness is caused by bacteria and your child will need antibiotics. **T F**
5. You can help prevent resistant bacteria by not using antibiotics for viral infections. **T F**
6. Do you believe it is OK for your child to take an antibiotic – even if the sickness is caused by a virus? **Yes No**
7. Do you think your child should stop taking an antibiotic as soon as he/she feels better and save the leftover antibiotics for the next time someone is sick. **Yes No**
8. If your child gets sick, always let your health provider decide if antibiotics are needed. **T F**

Answers:

1. FALSE Antibiotics will kill bacteria, but they won't kill 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. TRUE. Viruses cause most sore throats, earaches, and colds. Antibiotics will not kill viruses!
4. FALSE. Both viruses and bacteria change the color of the stuff your child coughs up when sick. Coughing up green stuff does not always mean that bacteria are making you sick.
5. TRUE. An antibiotic won't help if your child has a virus. Using antibiotics wrong can cause bacteria to become resistant to antibiotics, making them harder to be killed.
6. NO. Antibiotics won't help your child if he/she has a virus. By using antibiotics when they are not needed, you could also be helping to breed "super bugs" – "resistant" bacteria that are not killed by antibiotics.
7. NO. It is very important to finish taking all of the antibiotics given to your child – even if he/she is feeling better. All of the germs that made your child sick need to be killed and that takes all the antibiotics that were given. If you try to use "leftover," antibiotics, 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. TRUE. Taking antibiotics when not needed may result in super bugs. Super bugs are resistant to antibiotics, making them more difficult to be killed.

Antibiotics are a crucial weapon in the fight against disease. Help us keep them working. Always let your health provider decide if you need an antibiotic.