

# Viruses or Bacteria

## What's got you sick?

Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria. Viral illnesses cannot be treated with antibiotics. When an antibiotic is not prescribed, ask your healthcare professional for tips on how to relieve symptoms and feel better.

| Common Condition  | Common Cause |                   |       | Are Antibiotics Needed? |
|---|--------------|-------------------|-------|-------------------------|
|   | Bacteria     | Bacteria or Virus | Virus |                         |
| Strep throat  | ✓            |                   |       | Yes                     |
| Whooping cough  | ✓            |                   |       | Yes                     |
| Urinary tract infection   | ✓            |                   |       | Yes                     |
| Sinus infection   |              | ✓                 |       | Maybe                   |
| Middle ear infection  |              | ✓                 |       | Maybe                   |
| Bronchitis/chest cold (in otherwise healthy children and adults)* |              | ✓                 |       | No*                     |
| Common cold/runny nose  |              |                   | ✓     | No                      |
| Sore throat (except strep)  |              |                   | ✓     | No                      |
| Flu   |              |                   | ✓     | No                      |

\* Studies show that in otherwise healthy children and adults, antibiotics for bronchitis won't help you feel better.



**BE  
ANTIBIOTICS  
AWARE**

SMART USE, BEST CARE

To learn more about antibiotic prescribing and use, visit [www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use).

