Antibiotics Are Not Always Needed

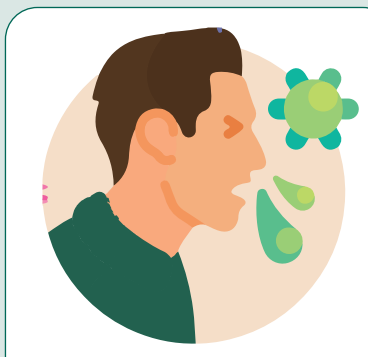
Most coughs, colds, sinusitis, ear infections and sore throats are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do not work against viruses.

Did you know?



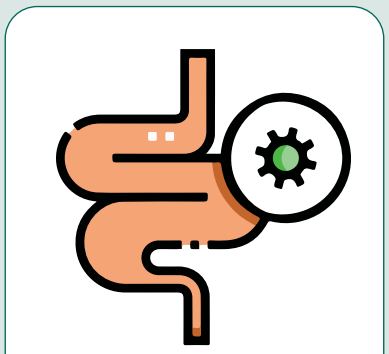
10-12 infections

10-12 viral infections a year is normal for young children.



Mucus

Green or yellow mucus does not mean you need an antibiotic.



Gut health

Antibiotics can affect the healthy bacteria in your gut.

These common infections can last up to:



Sore throat
7 days



Cough
21 days



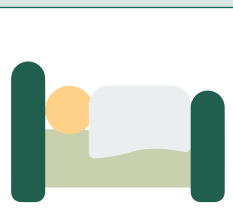
Common cold
14 days



Sinusitis
14-21 days

Recovery time is usually the same with or without antibiotics.

What can you do to feel better?



Rest



Fluids



Pain relief



Nasal saline



Honey age 1+

If you or your child's symptoms are getting worse or you are sicker than you would expect, seek medical advice urgently. Don't be afraid to ask 'could this be sepsis?'

Keep antibiotics working for when they are really needed.

RESIST

For more advice on common illnesses scan the QR code or visit: www2.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/

September 2026 Version 1