Most illnesses are caused by two kinds of germs: bacteria or viruses. Antibiotics can cure bacterial infections, but not viral infections. A common misconception is that when you or your family get sick, you go to the doctor and get an antibiotic. However, if a virus is making you sick, taking antibiotics can cause more harm than good. Antibiotics do not fight infections caused by viruses like colds, the flu, most sore throats, bronchitis, and many sinus or ear infections.

**What is an Antibiotic?**
An antibiotic is a powerful prescription medication used to fight bacterial infections. They destroy bacteria in your body and keep them from reproducing. Two common antibiotics are Amoxicillin and Azithromycin.

**Viruses & Antibiotics**
Antibiotics are powerful tools for fighting illnesses and diseases. Taking antibiotics too often or when not prescribed can cause the body to develop antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance occurs when germs outsmart the drug by developing the ability to defeat the drugs designed to kill them. This is quickly becoming a serious and dangerous issue globally. In some cases, the antibiotic-resistant infections can lead to serious medical complications.

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**Questions?**
Contact RMHP Care Management at 888-847-6466 for more information about using antibiotics.

For questions about your benefits, call RMHP Customer Service at 970-243-7050 or 800-346-4643. If you are deaf, hard of hearing, or have a speech disability, dial 711 for Relay Colorado, or use our Live Chat at rmhp.org. Para asistencia en español a llame at 800-346-4643.
Alternatives to Antibiotics

When you have a viral infection, try utilizing the following alternatives to taking antibiotics:

- Reduce fever by applying a cool damp cloth to forehead or neck, or taking a warm bath
- Take ibuprofen and acetaminophen as directed. Check with doctor for children dosing.
- Stay home from work / school to avoid spreading
- Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about over-the-counter medications to help reduce symptoms
- Drink more clear fluids including water, teas, soups, and ice chips
- Get plenty of rest
- Use a cool-mist vaporizer or humidifier to relieve congestion and soothe sore throat and cough
- Relieve congestion with a saline nasal spray
- Avoid cigarette smoke / smoking
- Soothe a sore throat with sore throat sprays, gargle with warm salt water, or use lozenges (do not give lozenges to young children)
- A teaspoon of honey helps to relieve a cough. This is good for children over 1 year (do not give honey to children younger than one year)

If you are diagnosed with the flu, talk with your doctor about prescription medications used to treat the viral illness. The next time you get a prescription for an antibiotic, consider discussing with your doctor how this medication will help your symptoms and ask any questions you may have.

How to Prevent Antibiotic Resistance

Antibiotic resistance occurs when germs develop drug resilience and it becomes more difficult to treat infections and germs. Here are some tips to avoid antibiotic resistance:

- Only take antibiotics when prescribed by your doctor
- Never share antibiotics
- Do not skip doses & take your medication as directed
- Vaccines can help prevent you from getting many viral diseases
- Always finish all of the medications given, even if you feel better before using up your prescription
- Antibiotics are not meant to be saved until you get sick again, so never save or hold onto them
- Safely dispose of medications and visit [www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov) to learn how to do this