



UNIVERSITY HEALTH SERVICES

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[HTTP://UHS.ND.EDU](http://uhs.nd.edu)



Why Don't I Need Antibiotics?

The most common visits to Health Services for infections are related to sore throats, upper respiratory tract infections (sinusitis, bronchitis), or ear infections. Both bacterial and viruses cause infections, but only bacterial infections can be treated with antibiotics.

Antibiotics are not effective against viral infections. In adults, the “classic” bacterial strep throat is rare. *Less than 15% of throat cultures done at Health Services are positive for strep. The only Strep that needs to be treated with an antibiotic is Group A.*

Most sore throats are caused by viruses and other micro-organisms that resolve spontaneously with supportive care. Most upper respiratory tract infections, including bronchitis, in adults, are caused by viruses.

WHY DID MY NURSE OR DOCTOR NOT GIVE ME AN ANTIBIOTIC?

It is likely that your medical condition is not caused by a bacterial infection and your health care provider has chosen not to treat you with an antibiotic at this time. This does not mean that you may not require an antibiotic in the future. At this time, your nurse or doctor prefers to observe the natural course of your illness, suggest measures to relieve symptoms and prescribe antibiotic therapy when, and if, the need for such treatment develops. Antibiotics can cause significant side effects, including rashes, diarrhea or more serious problems. Most people have a sense of security taking an antibiotic. This may be misleading for you and “mask” a true underlying medical condition that will need alternative therapy or support. Worldwide, antibiotic-resistant bacteria have appeared because these medications have been over-prescribed; this will make treating bacterial infections more difficult.

You should notify your health care-provider if you feel your symptoms have continued for too long, have changed, and/or gotten worse. If you have any questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call University Health Center at 631-7497.

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