

About **Antibiotics**

The ARK Antibiotic Review Kit



Taking antibiotics when you don't need to or taking them for too long can be unsafe for the future. This leaflet explains why.

When do we use antibiotics?

- **Antibiotics fight infections** caused by **bacteria**, but not all infections are caused by bacteria.
- When you first come to hospital, often it's **too early** to be sure of what is causing your illness, so doctors may give you antibiotics "**just in case**".

What are the risks of taking antibiotics?

Taking antibiotics kills **natural 'good' bacteria** in your body, which help keep you healthy. Taking antibiotics causes the bacteria that your body carries to become "**resistant**" to antibiotics, meaning that common antibiotics don't work anymore.

The more antibiotics you take the more likely you are:

- to **carry antibiotic resistant bacteria in your body** – which can be passed on to other people such as your family, friends and pets;
- to have antibiotic resistant infections in the future. When this happens, antibiotics **will work less well** or not at all.

Antibiotics can cause **side effects** (such as diarrhoea, rashes, feeling sick), which in rare cases can be **very severe** (spasm of the airways or collapse).

What will my doctor do?

When doctors prescribe antibiotics "**just in case**", they will "**review**" your response to treatment carefully.

- If you are on **review** and your doctors decide that the **illness isn't caused by bacteria**, they will **stop** antibiotics.
- When your doctors have **your test results** they can **decide how long** you need antibiotics for and **which ones you need**.
- Your doctors may also decide that you **need to carry on** with the antibiotics you had before, because they are right for your illness.

Regular **review** of antibiotic prescriptions helps to make sure that you only take the antibiotics **you really need to make you better**.

What should I do when the antibiotics stop?

Tell your doctor if:

- your **fever goes up again**;
- your **symptoms come back**.

They can always **restart your treatment** if needed.