



Back-up Antibiotics

What You Need to Know

For children aged 2 and over

Your child had an appointment on:

You were told to wait days before using
the antibiotic prescription.

In this leaflet, when we say 'prescriber,' we mean a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare worker.

What is a back-up antibiotic prescription?

Antibiotics are medicines used to fight some infections.

A back-up prescription means a prescriber has given your child an antibiotic prescription, but feels that you should wait to see if it is needed. This helps make sure antibiotics are only used when really needed – so they keep working well in the future.

Why has my child been given a back-up antibiotic prescription?

The prescriber checked your child and thinks they might have an infection.

If your child is healthy most of the time and has had all their vaccines, they will usually get better on their own from:

- Colds
- Most coughs
- Sore throats
- Earache



Most of these are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics don't work for viruses, and children's bodies can fight some infections without them. You should only use the antibiotic if your child:

- **Gets worse,** or
- **Doesn't start to feel better** after the number of days the prescriber told you to wait.

Why not use antibiotics straight away?

Antibiotics can cause problems like:

- Upset tummy
- Diarrhoea (runny poo)
- Feeling sick
- Skin rashes

Using antibiotics when they're not needed can make germs stronger, which means the antibiotic might not work when your child really needs it. This is called antibiotic resistance.

To find out more about antibiotic resistance, visit:

www.nhs.uk/medicines/antibiotics/antibiotic-antimicrobial-resistance

When will my child feel better?

Most children start to feel better in a few days without antibiotics. Some symptoms can take longer to go away:



Sore ear
3 to 7 days



Sore throat
4 to 7 days



Cold
up to 14 days



Cough
1 to 3 weeks

Your child probably won't need to take the antibiotic if:

- They are **not getting worse**
- and **slowly improving**

How long should I wait before using the antibiotic?

The prescriber will tell you how many days to wait. For example: "Wait 3 days. If your child isn't feeling better by then, start the antibiotic".

What if my child gets new or worrying symptoms?

The prescriber will tell you what signs to look out for. If your child gets worse or you're worried, get help from:

- Healthier Together: www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk
- Your GP
- NHS 111
- Your local pharmacy: <https://www.nhs.uk/service-search/pharmacy/find-a-pharmacy>
- A&E or call 999 (for emergencies)

You know your child best. If something doesn't feel right, get help.

How do I get the antibiotic if my child needs it?

The prescriber will explain how to get the medicine. You might:

- Get a paper prescription to take to the pharmacy
- Be told to pick up a prescription from your GP surgery
- Be given a token which is for an electronic prescription. Take the token to a pharmacy



What if my child doesn't need the antibiotic?

If your child feels better, **don't collect or use the antibiotic**. If you already have the paper prescription, you can:

- Tear it up or shred it
- Return it to your GP practice

If you already have the antibiotic medicine, you can return it to your local pharmacy. They will throw it away safely.

Don't save the paper prescription or the antibiotic medicine for later – it might not be the right medicine next time and could also stop the antibiotic from working when your child really needs it.

Where can I get more advice?

You can get more advice from:

- Healthier Together: www.healthiertogether.nhs.uk
- NHS: www.nhs.uk