Name: _____ Date: _____

Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Circle group

You have a stuffy nose, a sore throat, and a cough. A pill that fixes it fast would be nice. Many people think antibiotics are that pill. But when the doctor says no, there is a good reason.

There are different kinds of germs. Two common kinds are bacteria and viruses. Bacteria are tiny living things with one cell. Many are harmless, and some even help us. A few can make people sick, as in strep throat. Viruses are even smaller. They cannot make more viruses by themselves. They get inside the body's cells and use them. Colds and the flu are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics are medicines that stop or destroy bacteria. They attack parts that bacteria have and our cells do not. Viruses do not have those parts. So an antibiotic does nothing to a cold. You would get the side effects with no help.

There is one more reason. When antibiotics are used, a few bacteria may live. They pass their toughness on. Over time, some bacteria can no longer be stopped by the medicine. This is called antibiotic resistance. So doctors save antibiotics for when they are truly needed.

For a cold, rest, plenty of fluids, and time are best. The body fights the cold. If a doctor does give you an antibiotic, take it just as told.

Questions

1. What are two common kinds of germs?

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_____

2. What causes colds and the flu?

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_____

3. What do antibiotics do?

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_____

4. What is antibiotic resistance?

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_____

5. Why does an antibiotic do nothing for a cold?

_____

_____

6. Why do doctors save antibiotics for when they are truly needed?

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_____

7. What helps a person with a cold feel better?

_____

_____

Words to know

bacteria: tiny living things made of one cell
viruses: germs smaller than bacteria that must use living cells to multiply
antibiotics: medicines that stop or destroy bacteria
resistance: an ability to withstand something that usually causes harm

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Triangle group

You have a stuffy nose, a scratchy throat, and a cough. It would be nice if a pill could fix it quickly. Many people think antibiotics are that pill, but when the doctor says no, there is a good reason.

Germs come in different kinds. Two common kinds are bacteria and viruses. Bacteria are tiny living things made of a single cell, and many of them are harmless or even helpful. Some, however, can make people sick, as in strep throat. Viruses are even smaller, and they cannot multiply on their own. They invade the body's cells and use them to make more viruses. Colds and the flu are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics are medicines made to stop or destroy bacteria. They work by attacking things that bacteria have and our own cells do not. Viruses do not have those parts, so an antibiotic does nothing to a cold. Swallowing one would give you the side effects of the medicine without any of the benefits.

There is another reason to be careful. Whenever antibiotics are used, a few bacteria may survive and pass their toughness to the next generation. Over time, that can create bacteria that the medicine can no longer stop. This is called antibiotic resistance, and it is one reason doctors want antibiotics saved for the times they are truly needed.

With a cold, the best help is rest, plenty of fluids, and time while the body's defenses do their work. When a doctor does prescribe an antibiotic, it should be taken exactly as directed.

Questions

1. What are two common kinds of germs?

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2. What causes colds and the flu?

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_____

3. What are antibiotics made to do?

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_____

4. What is antibiotic resistance?

_____

_____

5. Why does an antibiotic do nothing for a cold?

_____

_____

6. Why do doctors want to save antibiotics for when they are truly needed?

_____

_____

7. What should a person do to feel better with a cold?

_____

_____

Words to know

bacteria: tiny living things made of one cell
viruses: germs smaller than bacteria that must use living cells to multiply
antibiotics: medicines that stop or destroy bacteria
resistance: an ability to withstand something that usually causes harm
prescribe: to say officially that a patient should take a medicine

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Square group

You have a stuffy nose, a scratchy throat, and a persistent cough, and it would be wonderful if a pill could cure you immediately. Many people assume that antibiotics are that pill, but when a doctor declines to prescribe one, there is an excellent reason.

Germs come in several varieties, and two of the most common are bacteria and viruses. Bacteria are minuscule living organisms consisting of a single cell, and a great many of them are harmless or even beneficial. A few, however, can cause illness, as in strep throat. Viruses are smaller still, and they are unable to multiply on their own. Instead they invade the body's cells and exploit them to manufacture more viruses. Colds and the flu are caused by viruses.

Antibiotics are medicines designed to halt or destroy bacteria. They work by targeting structures that bacteria possess and that our own cells lack. Viruses do not have those structures, so an antibiotic has no effect on a cold. Swallowing one would give you the side effects of the medicine without any of its benefits.

There is yet another reason for caution. Whenever antibiotics are used, a few bacteria may survive and hand their toughness down to the next generation. Gradually, this can produce bacteria that the medicine can no longer stop, a problem called antibiotic resistance. That is one reason doctors prefer to reserve antibiotics for the occasions when they are genuinely necessary.

When you have a cold, the most useful remedies are rest, plenty of fluids, and patience while the body's defenses do their work. If a doctor does prescribe an antibiotic, it should be taken exactly as directed.

Questions

1. What are two common varieties of germs?

_____

_____

2. What causes colds and the flu?

_____

_____

3. What are antibiotics designed to do?

_____

4. What is antibiotic resistance?

5. Why does an antibiotic have no effect on a cold?

6. Why do doctors reserve antibiotics for when they are genuinely necessary?

7. What should a person with a cold do to feel better?

Words to know

bacteria: tiny living things made of one cell
viruses: germs smaller than bacteria that must use living cells to multiply
antibiotics: medicines that stop or destroy bacteria
resistance: an ability to withstand something that usually causes harm
prescribe: to say officially that a patient should take a medicine

Talk together (every group has these)

1. Find one fact that every group read. How did your sheet say it?
2. What did your sheet tell you that you think another group's did not? Ask them.
3. What is one question about this topic that none of the sheets answered?

For the teacher: Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Each student sheet carries a shape, not a level. The same topic and facts, written three ways.

Circle: Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Easier · 222 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 4.7

1. Bacteria and viruses.
2. Viruses.
3. They stop or destroy bacteria.
4. When bacteria can no longer be stopped by the medicine.
5. Viruses do not have the parts that the medicine attacks.
6. Using them too much can let tough bacteria live and spread.
7. Rest, plenty of fluids, and time.

Triangle: Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

This passage · 257 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 7.4

1. Bacteria and viruses.
2. Viruses.
3. Stop or destroy bacteria.
4. Bacteria that the medicine can no longer stop.
5. Viruses do not have the parts that the medicine attacks.
6. Using them too often can help tough bacteria survive and spread.
7. Rest, drink plenty of fluids, and give the body time.

Square: Why Your Doctor Says No to Antibiotics for a Cold

Harder · 275 words · Flesch-Kincaid grade 10

1. Bacteria and viruses.
2. Viruses.
3. Halt or destroy bacteria.
4. A problem in which bacteria can no longer be stopped by the medicine.
5. Viruses do not have the structures that the medicine targets.
6. Frequent use can let tough bacteria survive and spread.
7. Rest, drink plenty of fluids, and be patient while the body's defenses work.