Antibiotics are strong medicines that can save lives. But antibiotics do not work against all infections. If you take antibiotics—or give them to your children—when they are not needed, you could do more harm than good.

Here’s Why...

• Antibiotics fight illnesses caused by bacteria. They won’t help you if you have an illness caused by a virus, such as the common cold or the flu. That’s why your Doctor will not always prescribe an antibiotic when you have an infection.
• Some antibiotics have side effects like nausea, diarrhea, or stomach pain. They can even cause allergic reactions.
• When antibiotics are overused or misused, bacteria become resistant to the antibiotic. That can make an illness very hard, or impossible, to cure in the future.
• Antibiotic resistance is dangerous for everyone, especially for young children, people who are very sick, and the elderly.

If your Doctor prescribes an antibiotic...

Make sure you understand how you need to take it. To protect yourself or your children, it’s important that you take your medicine exactly how your Doctor tells you.

• Take all your antibiotics. Don’t stop just because you’re feeling better. There could still be bacteria left to make you sick again.
• Take your antibiotics at the times suggested by your Doctor.
• Read the warning labels, or check with your Doctor or pharmacist about what food and drinks you should or should not have with your antibiotic.
• Never take antibiotics left over from an old prescription or given to you by someone else.

How do I know when I need antibiotics?

If you or your children have a cold, the flu, or a sore throat, chances are you have a virus. You’ll be fine with rest and plenty of fluids. But if you have any concerns, it’s always best to talk to your Doctor or call the IEHP 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line.

Watch your child carefully, and call your Doctor or the Nurse Advice Line if:

• Your child doesn’t get better in a few days
• Your child doesn’t want to eat or drink
• Your child has a fever that lasts more than three days

Only your Doctor can tell what kind of infection you have, if you need an antibiotic and which antibiotic is best for you to take.

If you or your child is sick and your Doctor’s office is closed...

Call the IEHP 24-Hour Nurse Advice Line at 1-888-244-IEHP (4347) or 1-866-577-8355 for TTY users.

There’s no need to leave the comfort of your home. IEHP has nurses available to talk to 24-hours a day including weekends and holidays!

You’ll get the expert advice you need to make decisions about your care. And if you or your children need immediate attention, a nurse can refer you to the nearest urgent care or emergency room.

You may need antibiotics for:

• Some ear infections
• Some sinus infections
• Strep throat
• Many types of skin infection
• Urinary tract infections

You DO NOT need antibiotics for:

• Most colds and flus
• Most coughs
• Most sore throats
• Many types of bronchitis
• Runny nose

Antibiotics Kill Bacteria Only. NOT Viruses.