

Asbury United Methodist Church

Virus vs. Bacteria

Doc, I Need Antibiotics!!

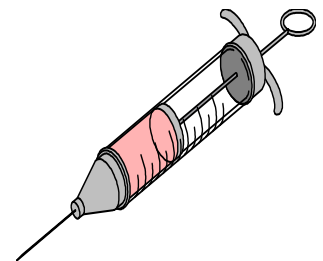
Do require Antibiotics if:

- Fever > 102.2
- Bulging, red tympanic membranes (eardrums) - Otitis Media
- Sinus tenderness without improvement for more than 10 days (sinusitis)
- Strep Throat

“Where should I start Doc? I don’t have a fever, but I’ve been feeling miserable for the last 3 days. I have a runny nose, a sore throat, and congestion/pressure that’s constantly there and is really bothering me. And, I’ve been coughing some nasty green stuff for the past 2 days...I think I need antibiotics.”

Patients with benign upper respiratory infections often have the inaccurate belief that antibiotics have proven

useful for and are necessary for proper treatment of illnesses. Antibiotics are very strong medicines, but they don’t cure everything. They basically have one function—to kill bacteria. From the symptoms above, it looks like you might possibly have a bad cold maybe the flu, a sore throat, nasal congestion or perhaps bronchitis. All of which are most commonly caused by viruses. They will not cure a viral infection, they will



not stop you from catching or transmitting a viral infection and, most importantly, they will not help you get better.

Antibiotics should only be used for the treatment of those patients who will benefit from it, and they should be avoided for treating patients who will not benefit from it.

Contrary to popular belief, yellow/green mucus is not sign of bacterial infection. It can be present in either viral OR bacterial infections.

So, if your doctor is not giving you antibiotics because you have a viral infection, what can he or she do for you? The physician can actively manage your symptoms with analgesics, anti-

pyretics (fever reducers), decongestants, etc. But most importantly, after evaluating you and your symptoms your family physician can reassure you that your illness is not a bacterial infection and that it will resolve by itself without the need for antibiotics.

