

Antibiotics Are NOT Harmless



Watchful Waiting Is An Important Skill



Pennsylvania
Department of Health

Watchful Waiting

Avoidance of antibiotics for suspected viral infections along with a monitoring plan and instructions for patients to contact their provider if symptoms worsen or persist longer than expected

- ❑ Antibiotics have saved millions of lives since their discovery. However, even with short durations, many of them are associated with significant toxicity, some of which can be permanent or fatal.¹⁻²
- ❑ Antibiotics can lead to long term changes of the normal bacteria in the gastrointestinal and genitourinary tracts, including destruction of nonpathogenic protective bacteria.³
- ❑ Use of antibiotics is associated with development of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. These resistant bacteria can be passed to other patients, health care workers, family members, and members of the general public.⁴



Potential Antibiotic Side Effects⁴⁻⁶

- Bone marrow suppression
- Hair loss
- Fatal colitis
- Severe skin damage
- Seizures
- Peripheral Nerve Damage
- Muscle and tendon damage, including weakening of heart muscle
- Hearing loss
- Lung damage
- Kidney and liver damage



Watchful Waiting Resources

[Watchful Waiting Prescription Pads](#)

[Watchful Waiting For Children with Ear Infections](#)

[Cough and Cold Symptom Relief Instructions](#)

**FOR MORE RESOURCES AND ARTICLES PLEASE CLICK
[HERE](#)**

References For Appropriate Use of Antibiotics

[American Academy of Family Physicians –
Antibiotic Use in Acute Upper Respiratory Infections](#)

[American College of Physicians and Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention \(CDC\) –
Appropriate Antibiotic Use for Acute Respiratory Tract Infection in Adults](#)

[CDC -
Adult and Pediatric Outpatient Treatment Recommendations](#)



Antimicrobial Stewardship: Best Care for Patients Today; Best Care for Patients in the Future



References

1. Vaughn VM, Flanders SA, Snyder A, et al. Excess Antibiotic Treatment Duration and Adverse Events in Patients Hospitalized With Pneumonia: A Multihospital Cohort Study. *Ann Intern Med.* 2019 Aug 6;171(3):153-163.
2. Geller AI, Lovegrove MC, Shehab N, Hicks LA, Sapiano MRP, Budnitz DS. National Estimates of Emergency Department Visits for Antibiotic Adverse Events Among Adults-United States, 2011-2015. *J Gen Intern Med.* 2018 Jul;33(7):1060-1068.
3. CDC Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States 2013. Updated 2013. Accessed August 27th, 2025. CDC Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States 2013
4. CDC Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States 2019. Updated 2019. Accessed August 27th, 2025. CDC Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States 2019
5. DailyMed Database. Accessed August 27th, 2025. National Library of Medicines Daily Med Repository
6. FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) Database. Accessed August 27th, 2025. FDA Adverse Event Reporting System (FAERS) Database

For Questions, Please Contact Us at RA-DHHAI@pa.gov

Check out the Pennsylvania Department of Health's Healthcare Associated Infection Prevention website [here](#)



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