

Antibiotics: Pharmacists Can Make the Difference

[Announcer] This program is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

[Pharmacist] You asked to speak to a pharmacist? How can I help you?

[Parent] My son isn't feeling well and I just don't know what to do. I'm frustrated! I thought the doctor would prescribe an antibiotic, but she told me he has a cold and doesn't need one.

[Pharmacist] Your doctor did the right thing. Antibiotics don't fight viral illnesses like colds. Taking antibiotics for colds can be harmful to your son's health, and taking antibiotics when they're not needed can make future infections harder to treat.

[Parent] I wouldn't want to give my son something that could harm him. I just want him to feel better. He has a sore throat, he's congested, and isn't sleeping. On top of that, I had to miss work because he needed to stay home from school.

[Pharmacist] I see. Well the symptoms you're describing are pretty common for viral illnesses like colds, and antibiotics don't kill viruses, so they won't help relieve his cold symptoms. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help him feel better until the virus runs its course.

[Parent] Like something we don't need a prescription for?

[Pharmacist] When kids have these symptoms we usually recommend things that don't require a prescription, like over-the-counter pain relievers, decongestants, and saline nose sprays. When my daughter has a cold I use a humidifier to help her breathe more easily, give her plenty of fluids, and make sure that she rests. All these things help relieve symptoms, but they won't help speed up recovery. A cold can take up to 10 days to run its course.

[Parent] Thanks for taking the time to explain. I really appreciate it.

[Pharmacist] You're welcome. Keep in mind that not all over-the-counter products are recommended for young children, so it's important you always read the label carefully so you don't give young children medications that are labeled only for older children or adults. If you have questions or need help deciding what would be best for your son, please ask me, another pharmacist, or your primary care provider.

[Narrator] For educational tools about appropriate antibiotic use and how to treat cold symptoms, visit CDC's Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work website at cdc.gov/getsmart/community.

[Announcer] For the most accurate health information, visit www.cdc.gov or call 1-800-CDC-INFO.