

# Feeling Sick?

Do you ever wonder what is causing your illness?

It could be a virus or a bacteria...  
and the differences are important.

## Virus vs. Bacteria

**Viruses** are particles that invade your body's cells. Viruses contain genetic material (DNA or RNA) and a protein coat. Viruses take many shapes and are much smaller than bacteria.

**Bacteria** are one-celled organisms that take several shapes - spheres, rods, spirals. They are found everywhere - in food, dirt, and on our bodies. Bacteria can live outside our body's cells. Most bacteria are good - such as those that help with digestion, but some can cause infections.

**Viruses** cause diseases such as the common cold, many sinus infections, acute bronchitis and most sore throats. The body fights against viral infections by producing a fever or inflammation.

**Bacteria** cause infections such as strep throat by invading the body's cells. The body fights against bacteria by producing a fever or inflammation. Symptoms of bacterial infections are similar to those caused by viral infections.

**Antibiotics cannot kill viruses.** Antibiotics will not help a viral infection or stop the spread of a viral infection to others. Taking antibiotics for viral infections can increase the chance of an antibiotic-resistant infection later.

- Rest, drink fluids
- Relieve symptoms with over the counter medications
- Call your doctor if your symptoms worsen



**Bacterial** infections usually need to be treated with an antibiotic - medications that kill bacteria. If you are prescribed an antibiotic, follow instructions closely:

- take all the medication as directed even if you feel better
- do not share antibiotics or save them for the next time you are sick



When antibiotics are misused, bacteria can develop resistance to the antibiotics over time.  
Antibiotic resistance affects everyone. YOU can help keep antibiotics working!