



A patient's guide to

Oral antibiotics

The Infection team has recommended you take a course of oral (by mouth) antibiotics. The reason for this should already have been explained to you.

When are antibiotics used?

Antibiotics only treat bacterial infections and are ineffective against viral infections. Most infections are viral and many bacterial infections will resolve spontaneously without the need for antibiotics. However, antibiotics may be needed to treat a bacterial infection that:

- Is unlikely to clear up without them
- Carries a risk of more serious complications if untreated
- Poses a risk to others unless treated

Additionally, antibiotics may occasionally be used in very specific circumstances to:

- Control an infection that cannot be fully treated, (suppression)
- Prevent infection after an exposure to someone else, (prophylaxis)



How do I take antibiotics?

For many reasons it is important to take your antibiotics as directed. In addition, please read the product leaflet supplied with your antibiotics.

It is essential to finish taking a prescribed course of antibiotics, even if you feel better, unless a healthcare professional tells you otherwise. If you stop taking an antibiotic part way through a course you may suffer a recurrence of the infection or the bacteria may develop resistance to the antibiotic.

You should continue taking your antibiotics until the planned stop date or we review you in clinic. Pharmacy at the RNOH will supply the first 2 weeks medication from the start of your treatment then further supplies should be obtained from your GP until you return to the bone infection clinic.





Monitoring

In order to ensure you are tolerating these antibiotics you will need to have blood tests every 2 weeks, even if you feel well. Occasionally the first sign of any problem is on blood tests.

A letter has already been sent to your GP but please remember to book an appointment for your blood tests.

Side effects

Most antibiotics are tolerated well when used appropriately and most people do not have any problems during the course. However, as with any medication, side effects do occasionally occur.

Serious problems are rare and the most common complaints include:

- Feeling sick
- Bloating or indigestion
- Diarrhoea - this can be a result of taking antibiotics or, rarely, due to *Clostridium difficile* infection

Clostridium difficile is a specific infection that can occur when antibiotics kill some of the normal bacteria in your gut resulting in diarrhoea. It is diagnosed by testing a stool sample in the laboratory and sometimes needs treatment with a different antibiotic. If you develop diarrhoea that is frequent, foul smelling, or bloody, please report this to the OPAT team who will assess you and may send your stool for testing.

- In addition, there may be more specific side effects with certain antibiotics which your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will inform you about.

Allergic Reactions

Allergic reactions are uncommon but do happen. They may occur at any time during the course, not just at the start. In most cases they are minor and can take the form of:

- A blotchy rash
- Mild itching

Most minor reactions can be treated with an antihistamine or simply stopping the antibiotic. Please call the OPAT Team for advice.

Rarely a more severe form of allergy, known as anaphylaxis, may occur. If you develop any of the following signs:

- **Wheezing**
- **Tightness of the throat, which can cause breathing difficulties**
- **A raised, intensely itchy skin rash (weals or hives)**
- **Facial swelling **this is a medical emergency and can be life-threatening if prompt treatment isn't given. Dial 999 immediately and ask for an ambulance.****

Missed Doses

If you accidentally miss a dose of your antibiotics skip the missed dose and continue your regular dosing schedule. Do not take a double dose to make up for a missed one.

Accidentally taking an extra dose

Accidentally taking one extra dose of your antibiotic is unlikely to cause you any serious harm but it may increase your chances of experiencing side effects, such as feeling sick, stomach ache, or diarrhoea.

If you accidentally take more than one extra dose, or you are worried or experiencing side effects please call the OPAT team on:

- Monday to Friday (excluding bank holidays):
0900 to 1700hrs **020 8385 3046**
- Outside of these hours contact call NHS 111 for advice.

If you would like this leaflet translated into another language/large print, please contact the Quality Team on 020 8909 5439.

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