



Find out more

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You can receive help with queries about NCH&C services from **Patient Advice and Liaison Service**

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Antibiotics

Information for patients

Introduction

Antibiotics are used to treat or prevent some types of bacterial infection. They work by killing bacteria or preventing them from spreading. If your Podiatrist thinks you have a foot infection you should start antibiotics as soon as possible. The type of antibiotic will depend on how bad the infection is and whether there is a risk of complications.

Different types of bacterial infection need different types of antibiotics. A small sample should be taken from your foot to check which bacteria are causing the infection. We may change your antibiotic when the results of these tests come back. You might also have an X-ray to see how severe the foot infection is. Some people may need a type of scan called an MRI.

How to take your antibiotics

Take antibiotics as directed on the packet or the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine, or as instructed by your Podiatrist, GP or pharmacist. Antibiotics may be given by mouth (tablets or liquid) or injection into the body. Check if they need to be taken with food or on an empty stomach.

Antibiotics can sometimes interact with other medicines or substances. This means it can have an effect that is different to what you expected. If you want to check that your medicines are safe to take with your antibiotics, ask your Podiatrist or local pharmacist.

Make sure you take the **full dose** at the **correct intervals** and **complete the course** (unless we tell you to stop). This is important to make sure all the bacteria are killed and that bacteria do not become resistant to antibiotics.

It's recommended that you do not drink alcohol while taking antibiotics.

The infection should start to improve within 1 to 2 days of starting antibiotics. Tell your us or see your GP if

- it doesn't start to improve,
- if it starts to get worse or
- if you feel very unwell at any time.

How long you have to take antibiotics will depend on how bad the infection is and what structures in the foot are affected. Bone infection (osteomyelitis) usually requires a much longer course of antibiotics to treat effectively.

If you miss a dose

If you forget to take a dose of your antibiotics, take that dose as soon as you remember and then continue to take your course of antibiotics as normal.

But if it's almost time for the next dose, 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 - There's an increased risk of side effects if you take 2 doses closer together than recommended.

Accidentally taking 1 extra dose of your antibiotic is unlikely to cause you any serious harm. But it will increase your chances of getting side effects.

Side effects of antibiotics

As with any medicine, antibiotics can cause side effects. Most antibiotics do not cause problems if they're used properly and serious side effects are rare.

The common side effects include:

- being or feeling sick
- tummy discomfort / pain
- bloating and indigestion
- diarrhoea

Around 1 in 15 people have an allergic reaction to antibiotics. In most cases, the allergic reaction is mild to moderate and can take the form of a raised, itchy skin rash (urticaria, or hives), coughing, wheezing or tightness of the throat, which can cause breathing difficulties. If you're concerned, contact your Foot Clinic, GP or call NHS 111.

It is important to tell your Podiatrist about any allergic reactions to antibiotics you may have experienced in the past.