

# Healthy Outcomes

National Immunization Awareness Month ([NIAM](#))

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Central PA  
Health Care Quality Unit  
Monthly Newsletter  
August 2024

[WEBSITE](#)



## Do's and Don'ts of Taking Antibiotics

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### **Prescribed a course of antibiotics recently? Use them wisely to feel your best.**

When you feel sick, rest, fluids and over-the-counter medication are in order – and maybe a visit to your healthcare provider. And in some cases, they will prescribe something stronger: antibiotics.

#### **What are antibiotics?**

"Antibiotics are medicines used to fight bacterial infections," says Kelly Guza, PharmD, associate vice president of acute pharmacy services at Geisinger. "They work by killing bacteria in the body and preventing bacterial growth."

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When you've got strep throat or a pesky UTI, antibiotics can bring fast relief. And they prevent infection as you heal after surgery or an injury.

But when you are taking them, there are a few things to do (and not do) to make the experience a smooth one.



### **What to do while on antibiotics**

When starting your course of antibiotics, keep these do's at top of mind to limit side effects and get back to feeling better. "Using antibiotics properly can also help prevent antibiotic resistance," says Dr. Guza.

#### **Tell your provider about other medications**

Before your provider prescribes you antibiotics, tell them about any other medications you are taking. "This can help avoid potential drug interactions or side effects," Dr. Guza says. Not sure what to mention? Think prescriptions, over-the-counter meds and any vitamins or supplements.

#### **Take them as prescribed**

When they write your prescription, your provider will include instructions for how to take the antibiotics. Some are meant to be taken at the same time every day. Others may need to be taken with (or without) food. Follow those directions exactly as they are written for maximum effectiveness.

#### **Watch for side effects**

Some antibiotics can cause side effects like an upset stomach or diarrhea. These are common and will go away when you finish your medicine.

Contact your healthcare provider if you notice more serious side effects, like:

- Persistent or severe diarrhea
- Abdominal pain
- Fever

"These can be symptoms of a serious infection called *Clostridium difficile*, or C. diff," says Dr. Guza. If you do develop C. diff, your healthcare provider may prescribe a different type of antibiotic to combat that infection.

#### **Another thing to look for with antibiotics? Allergic reactions.**

Common antibiotic allergy symptoms include:

- Skin rashes (although not all rashes are true allergies)
- Hives
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling of the tongue, face, or lips

**1 out of 5**  
medication-related  
visits to the emergency  
room are from reactions  
to antibiotics.

If you do have symptoms of an allergic reaction, contact your healthcare provider right away. Call 911 or get to the nearest emergency room if you have severe symptoms like shortness of breath or face swelling.

#### **Try a probiotic**

Because they kill good as well as bad bacteria, antibiotics can wreak havoc on your stomach. Some can also lead to a yeast infection. To minimize stomach upset and restore healthy bacteria, try taking your antibiotic with a probiotic. Start your probiotic the same day as your antibiotic – and for maximum effectiveness, take it two hours after your antibiotic.

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Continue the probiotic for a few weeks after you finish your antibiotic to build healthy bacteria back up.

The array of probiotics available is huge, so if you are not sure which to use, talk to your pharmacist or other healthcare provider. They can help you find the right one.

### What not to do while on antibiotics

Taking antibiotics properly can smooth your path to recovery. That is why knowing what to avoid matters, too. Consider these don'ts the next time you have a prescription.

#### Don't take them unnecessarily

Have a cold? Antibiotics will not help. "Because antibiotics are used to treat bacterial infections, they won't work on viruses, like colds or flu," Dr. Guza says. Using them improperly can raise your risk of antibiotic resistance. This means future infections will not respond as well when you do need antibiotics.

#### Don't use medicine that's old or not yours

Thinking about using that old penicillin in the back of your medicine cabinet? Think again. Medicine loses effectiveness over time. So those old pills you've had since the last time you were sick may not work as well as they did before (or at all). Another no-no: taking an antibiotic prescribed for someone else. But because your partner's antibiotic wasn't prescribed to tackle your toothache, it may not be the right dose or the right kind. Or you could be allergic. Play it safe and talk to your provider instead.

#### Don't stop taking antibiotics too soon

You may start to feel better before you finish your prescription. But keep taking your antibiotics until they are gone, even if your symptoms have cleared up. "Symptoms can start improving before the infection is cleared," says Dr. Guza. Stopping your medicine early could leave you feeling sick if the infection is not entirely gone. And it can make you more likely to have future drug-resistant infections that do not respond to antibiotics.

#### When in doubt, ask

If you have questions about antibiotics – what they are for, how they work or how to take them – start by talking with your pharmacist. They will guide you through the do's and don'ts of these bacteria-busters so you can get back to feeling like yourself again.

**Remember, antibiotics are life-saving drugs, and they need to be used properly. If you have any questions about your antibiotics, please talk to your healthcare team.**

Read more on [Antibiotic Prescribing and Use.](#)

## IMPROVING ANTIBIOTIC USE

**Do I really need antibiotics?**

**SAY YES TO ANTIBIOTICS** when needed for certain infections caused by **bacteria**.

**SAY NO TO ANTIBIOTICS** for **viruses**, such as colds and flu, or runny noses, even if the mucus is thick, yellow or green. Antibiotics also won't help for some common bacterial infections including most cases of bronchitis, many sinus infections, and some ear infections.

Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria.

Antibiotics do NOT work on viruses.

# Accompanying an Individual to the Doctor

TIPS FOR DIRECT SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER CAREGIVERS



[Health Care for Adults with Disabilities Tip Sheet](#)

Adults with intellectual or other developmental disabilities may have difficulties explaining their symptoms or expressing pain, so the health care provider may have trouble determining the presence of an illness or injury. Having a direct support professional who knows the patient, knows how the patient communicates, and knows some medical information about the patient can be vital to helping the primary care provider effectively treat the patient.

## When illness is suspected

- What symptoms does the patient have?
- How long has the patient had these symptoms?
- How has the patient been eating and sleeping? Any changes? Any changes in toileting habits? Any significant changes in the patient's life, such as a new roommate or loss of a parent or friend?
- If the patient has limited communication skills and is behaving differently than usual, what behaviors have created cause for concern?
- How long have these differences in behavior been evident?

[More from Vanderbilt Kennedy Center](#)

**Join the Podcast, Life Without Limits- Planning with the PA Family Network. Each week they chat with professionals, individuals with disabilities and their families as they navigate the system and live a Life without Limits.**

*Going to the Emergency Room can be scary for anyone. For those with an intellectual disability/autism, it can be even more daunting. Rachel Chitswara, a physician's assistant in Wilkes-Barre, joins us to discuss the importance of being prepared for a medical visit.*



**Life Without Limits**  
Planning with the PA Family Network

## Medical Visit Prep: Tips from a Physician's Assistant

Life Without Limits- Planning with the PA Family Network



1x More Info Share

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**Be My Eyes** connects blind and low-vision users who want sighted assistance with volunteers and companies anywhere in the world, through live video and artificial intelligence. Use your smartphone to request video support, any time, day or night.

The app is completely free, and anyone can sign up as a volunteer to be eyes for a person!

Check it out here and share as needed: [Be My Eyes - See the world together](#)



### **Prevention and Control of Seasonal Influenza with Vaccines: Recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP)–United States, 2023-24'**

#### **Timing of vaccination:**

For most persons who need only one dose of influenza vaccine for the season, vaccination should ideally be offered during September or October. However, vaccination should continue throughout the season as long as influenza viruses are circulating.

Vaccination during July and August is not recommended for most groups. Timing considerations include:

- For most adults (particularly those aged  $\geq 65$  years) and pregnant persons in the first or second trimester, vaccination during July and August should be avoided unless there is concern that later vaccination might not be possible.
- Children 6 months through 8 years who require 2 doses should receive the first dose as soon as vaccine is available.
- Vaccination during July and August can be considered for children of any age who require only 1 dose.
- Vaccination in July and August can be considered for pregnant persons who are in the third trimester during these months.

[Read more](#)

## **HCQU Supports and Services**

Our registered nurses provide free health-related training to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (ID/DD), and to caregivers, service providers and county staff.

Contact the [regional nurse](#) to discuss virtual training opportunities specific to your needs in your county. The Training Index has been replaced with [A Guide to Central PA HCQU Supports and Services](#). This guide outlines the valuable work the HCQU has to offer and how working with us makes a difference in the lives of the individuals you support. (*Training is not limited to topics highlighted in the guide.*)

Take a Free [Online Course](#)

### **Important Central PA HCQU Forms:**

- [2024 Central PA HCQU Referral Request Form](#)
- [2024 Blair County HCQU Referral Form](#)
- [HRST User Account Template and Resources](#)

# Turkey Burger with Zucchini

By Skinnytaste

The trick to making the juiciest turkey burgers EVER is to add grated zucchini! A huge bonus if you want your kids to eat more veggies - they'll never know!

CAN BE MADE ON THE STOVE, GRILL OR AIR FRYER.

## INGREDIENTS:

- 6 oz grated zucchini, when squeezed 4.25 oz.
  - 1 lb. 93% lean ground turkey
  - 1/4 cup seasoned whole wheat or gluten-free breadcrumbs
  - 1 clove garlic, grated
  - 1 tbsp grated red onion
  - 1 tsp kosher salt and fresh pepper
  - oil spray
- Complete [recipe](#) with instructions



## Are you using Neighborly?

Neighborly is your go-to resource to connect with everything from food and housing to medical care. Neighborly lends a hand to help you find **free or reduced-cost** community resources near you. Search for local support resources to access food, housing, transportation, utility assistance, medical care, job training and more.

Register for Virtual Neighborly Trainings and Events: [Click Here](#)

### Are your new staff on the monthly newsletter distribution list?

Please email the [HCQU](#) to add names and email addresses.

### Let the Central PA HCQU help you.

Our HCQU includes registered nurses experienced in serving individuals with an intellectual Disability (ID) and/or Autism and their support staff and families. Visit our [website](#) for their contact information and the counties they support.