

# AHRQ Safety Program for Telemedicine: Improving Antibiotic Use

## COVID-19 – Patient Guide for Children and Adults

### What is COVID-19?

- The SARS-CoV-2 virus causes COVID-19.
- COVID-19 can make you feel tired or run down and can give you a fever, sore throat, headache, cough, muscle aches, loss of taste or smell, shortness of breath, or loss of taste or smell.
- COVID-19 spreads from person to person through the air.
- After you are exposed to COVID-19, it can take between 2 and 14 days to start feeling sick.
- You can spread COVID-19 to others between 1-2 days before you get ill and 8-10 days after symptoms begin. You are most likely to spread COVID-19 between 1-2 days before you get ill and 5 days after symptoms begin.
- You can limit the chance of spreading COVID-19 by:
  - Washing your hands often with soap/water or hand sanitizer.
  - Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
  - Wearing a mask when you are sick and around other people.
  - Staying in well-ventilated areas.
  - Staying home from work, school, or daycare, if feasible.



### What should I do to feel better?

- Some patients can take antiviral medicines to treat COVID-19. These work best if taken right after you begin to feel sick, but can be taken within 5 days of getting sick. Talk to your healthcare provider about whether you need antiviral medicines.
- Ask your healthcare provider what to do. They may tell you to:
  - Take acetaminophen (commonly called Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (commonly called Advil® or Motrin®) for symptoms; store brands (e.g., CVS brand) are just as good as name brands (e.g., Tylenol®).
  - Get plenty of rest, drink lots of water or other liquids, and avoid smoking.
  - To help a sore throat, gargle with warm water, take cough drops (generally wait until a child is at least 6 years old), take about ½ a teaspoon to 1 teaspoon of honey every 2 hours or so (do not give honey to children under 1 year of age), and/or drink warm tea.

### What is the role of antibiotics?

- Antibiotics do not help COVID-19. Antibiotics only kill bacteria, and bacteria do not cause COVID-19. If you use antibiotics to treat viruses, they won't make you feel better and they can do more harm than good. You will still feel sick, and the antibiotic may give you a skin rash, diarrhea, or a yeast infection.

### When will I feel better?

- Most people feel sick from COVID-19 for about a week.
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine (also called a COVID shot) every year is the best way to prevent COVID-19. You can sometimes still get COVID-19 even if you get the COVID shot, but your illness will be less severe.

### Contact your healthcare provider immediately if:

- You do not feel better after 2 weeks.
- Go to the emergency room if you develop a difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest, dizziness, confusion, sleepiness, or severe or persistent vomiting.

*This document is intended to provide health-related information so that you may be better informed. It is not a substitute for your healthcare provider's medical advice and should not be relied upon for treatment for specific medical conditions.*



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