

'A word of Advice'

If your GP has prescribed antibiotics take them as directed and make sure to finish the course. Antibiotic resistance is much more likely to develop if antibiotics are not taken as directed.

We can reassure you that your GP will prescribe antibiotics when you need them.

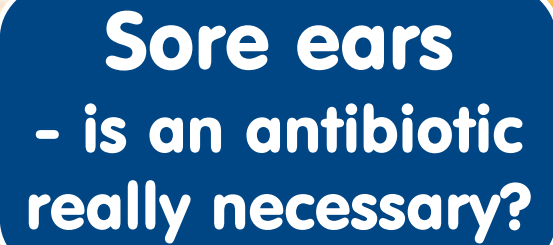
By using antibiotics only when you need them they are much more likely to help you.

- Antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting infections.
- Many infections get better without antibiotics – ear infections are a good example of this.
- Antibiotics have little effect on ear pain in the first 24 hours of infection.
- Paracetamol or ibuprofen can help to reduce pain and fever.
- You can get helpful advice from your community pharmacist.

Developed from initial work by East Lothian LHCC.

Designed by the Social Inclusion & Community Care Directorate of **Lothian NHS Board.**

Adapted by **NHS Borders** with Lothian Health Board's permission

A dark blue rounded rectangular box containing white text, set against a background of blurred yellow and white pills. The text reads: 'Sore ears - is an antibiotic really necessary?'

**Sore ears
- is an antibiotic
really necessary?**

Many infections get better without antibiotics – sore ears are a good example of this.

Background information

Antibiotics are very important medicines.

Viral infections are much more common than bacterial infections, examples of problems caused by viruses include all colds and flu, most sore throats and many coughs.

Antibiotics help us fight infections caused by bacteria, they don't work at all in those caused by viruses.

We are finding that some bacteria can survive the effects of antibiotics – they become resistant, and antibiotics no longer work against these bacteria.

The more we use antibiotics, the more likely it is that bacteria will develop resistance. This means that antibiotics are becoming less effective at fighting infections. Antibiotics may also cause unpleasant side effects.

We can't stop resistance developing but we can do a lot to slow it down and stop it spreading simply by not using antibiotics when we don't need them. We now know that many infections get better just as quickly without antibiotics. A good example of this is sore ears.

What Do We Know?

Studies have shown that most children with ear infections will get better without an antibiotic in a few days. The studies also showed that the children were no more likely to develop further ear infections or develop hearing problems later.

Antibiotics have little effect on ear pain in the first 24 hours of an ear infection.

In view of all this, in the Borders we have agreed a policy not to give antibiotics routinely for ear infections.

If the ear infection persists and you or your child are very unwell, then your GP may prescribe antibiotics.

We recommend treatment with paracetamol or ibuprofen, which can reduce ear pain as well as a high temperature. Always use the recommended dose. Before taking check with your GP or Community Pharmacist if on other medication

Remember your community pharmacist may be able to give you helpful advice on symptoms.

