

## Antibiotic Resistance

Myth 3 – It is okay to stop taking an antibiotic after your symptoms go away.

### **ANTIBIOTIC PRESCRIPTIONS: TO FINISH OR NOT TO FINISH? FIRST HEALTH PROVIDES THE ANSWER**

It's winter, the temperature is 20 degrees and the ground is filled with snow. You are outside with your family building a snowman. You are wearing a winter coat, which is keeping you warm. The coat is preventing you from being cold, so you keep it on. It's the reasonable thing to do.

Use the same scenario with antibiotics. You are sick, your doctor diagnoses your illness as a bacterial infection and prescribes an antibiotic. You start the medication, and within days you are feeling much better. So should you stop taking the antibiotic? No!

Just as if you are out in the cold, you wouldn't take off your coat once you warmed up. By taking off the coat, you would get cold all over again. Same thing with antibiotics. You should not stop taking an antibiotic once your symptoms go away. This puts you at an even greater risk for getting sick all over again. But the next time could potentially be worse due to resistant bacteria.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it's important to finish the entire prescription, even if you feel well or no longer experience symptoms. By not completing the prescription or skipping doses, the strongest of the bacteria may remain. These bacteria will continue to replicate and you will have to fight the infection a second time—this time facing a stronger opponent.

If you take your medication exactly as it is prescribed, you should be well enough to go outside in the cold to build a snowman—of course with your winter coat on!