

long term care
connection

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questions & answers

What about antibiotics?

Q. I'm sick. Don't I need an antibiotic?

A. Your doctor has examined you and found that your illness is from a virus. Most colds, flu and sore throats are caused by viruses. Antibiotics do **not** treat viruses.

Q. If antibiotics don't treat viruses, what do they treat?

A. Antibiotics are used to treat illnesses caused by bacteria, like strep throat and many kinds of pneumonia.

Q. What harm would it do if I took an antibiotic?

A. Taking an antibiotic when you don't need one leads to the problem of antibiotic resistance. This means that the bacteria can no longer be killed by the drug. Eventually, it could mean having to use stronger and stronger antibiotics.



Feel better when you're sick

A cold usually lasts only a couple of days. Feeling tired from the flu may last for several weeks.

To feel better while you are sick, drink lots of fluids, stay in bed and use a humidifier to put water into the air.

There are also over-the-counter products to help you feel better. Always read the label, including the warnings, before taking any medication.

If you have a condition like high blood pressure, diabetes or heart disease, ask your doctor which medication is best for you.

Medications that may help are:

- Antihistamines, which help with itchy, watery eyes, sneezing and a scratchy throat.
- Decongestants, which help with nasal stuffiness.
- Cough suppressants, which help slow coughing.
- Expectorants, which help break up mucus in the chest.
- Pain relievers, which help reduce aches.
- Fever reducers, which help reduce fever.

Sources: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, U.S. Food and Drug Administration

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Stopping heartburn

There's nothing fun about heartburn, starting with how it happens.

You get heartburn when stomach acids back up into your throat. You might feel a burning pain in your chest and have a bad taste in your mouth.

Heartburn might be worse after you eat, or when you lie down or bend over.

It may help to:

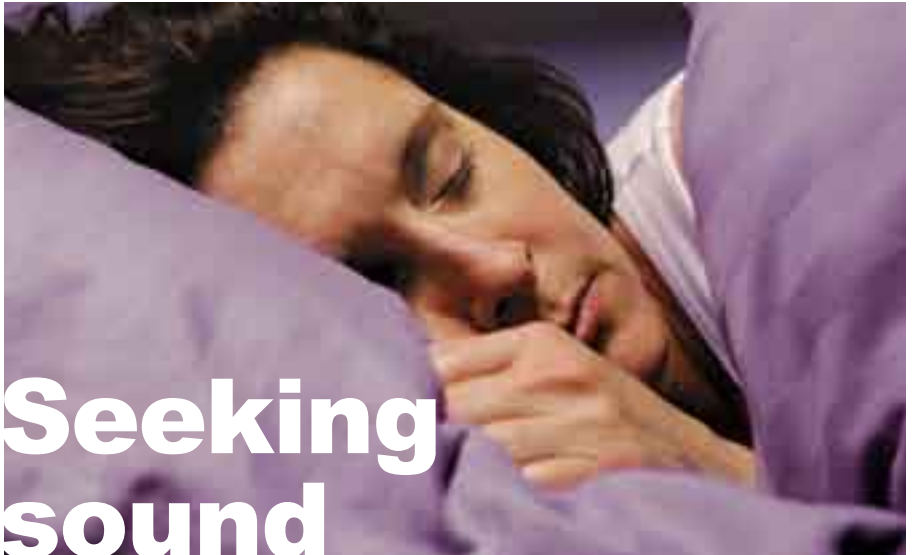
- Avoid onions, mint, tomatoes, strong spices, citrus juice and coffee.
- Eat at least two hours before lying down.
- Plan your eating so you avoid big meals.
- Avoid smoking.
- Raise the head of your bed 4 to 6 inches.
- Control your weight.

Antacids can often help with heartburn. But if they don't or if the changes you make don't help, see your doctor. Severe or regular heartburn can be a sign of something more serious.

Also, heartburn isn't heart trouble. But the signs of each condition can be confused with the other.

If you have pain that goes into your neck and shoulders, shortness of breath or other possible heart attack signs, get help right away.

Source: National Heartburn Alliance



Seeking sound sleep

It's late, really late. You toss and you turn, and still no sleep.

You know you'll be tired come morning if you don't get some sleep soon. But that only seems to make things worse.

Sound familiar?

You're not alone

Nearly half of us have insomnia at some time. You might have a hard time falling asleep, or you wake up during the night and have trouble getting back to sleep, or you wake up too early in the morning.

By day, this can leave you tired, moody and less able to focus on tasks.

Sleep problems may have many causes. For example, coffee and soft drinks with caffeine can affect your sleep. Stress or not keeping a regular sleep schedule can cause you troubles too.

How to sleep better

These tips may help you get the best rest:

- Go to bed and get up at the same time each day.
- Avoid caffeine six hours before bedtime.
- Start a bedtime routine, such as taking a warm bath or reading a book.
- Avoid napping a lot.
- Don't drink alcohol or smoke.
- Exercise often, but do it during the day.

Nearly half of us have insomnia at some time.

- Keep your bedroom quiet and dark.
- Avoid eating close to bedtime.
- If you can't sleep after 30 minutes, go to another room for a while before returning to bed.

If your sleep troubles continue or you have concerns about your sleeping, see your doctor.

Source: National Sleep Foundation