

DOES MY CAT NEED ANTIBIOTICS?



Antibiotics are powerful tools in the life-and-death fight against disease, and they must be used appropriately and responsibly to protect their effectiveness in both human and veterinary medicine. That means using antimicrobials, such as antibiotics, only when they are needed to treat an animal's medical condition. Antibiotics are only needed for treating certain infections caused by bacteria—viral illnesses cannot be treated with antibiotics.

The responsibility of preserving antimicrobial effectiveness falls to all of us—animal owners **and** veterinarians. This chart links common illnesses and symptoms with their causes to help you understand why antibiotics may or may not be part of your cat's treatment plan.

Common condition	Is your pet feverish or listless/tired?	Common cause			Are systemic antibiotics needed?
		Bacteria	Virus	Parasites	
Bacteria in the urine, no symptoms	No	●			No
Idiopathic bladder inflammation	No				No
Bladder infection, acute	No	●			Yes
Bladder infection, ongoing	No	●			Yes
Kidney Infection	Yes	●			Yes
Sneezing/runny nose (upper airway disease) for fewer than 10 days	No	●	●		No
Sneezing/runny nose (upper airway disease) for fewer than 10 days	Yes	●	●		Yes
Sneezing/runny nose (upper airway disease) for more than 10 days		●	●	●	Maybe*
Bronchitis		●	●	●	Maybe*
Pneumonia (lower airway disease)	No	●			Yes
Pneumonia (lower airway disease)	Yes	●			Yes
Diarrhea for fewer than 10 days	No	●	●	●	No
Diarrhea for more 10 days	No	●	●	●	Maybe*

**Your veterinarian will use their clinical judgement to decide whether antibiotics are need in these cases.*

References

- ISCAID, UTI, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tvjl.2019.02.008>
- ISCAID, Resp, 2017. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/jvim.14627>
- ISCAID, Pyoderma, 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1111/vde.12118>
- CLSI. *Understanding Susceptibility Test Data as a Component of Antimicrobial Stewardship in Veterinary Settings. 1st ed. CLSI report VET09.* Wayne, PA: Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute; 2019

Periodontal disease, dental cleaning or dental extraction (without osteomyelitis), and elective spay/neuter surgery are other common conditions or procedures for which systemic antibiotics are not needed.

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