

# Antibiotics: One of the Greatest Discoveries of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century

*This podcast is presented by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. CDC — safer, healthier people.*

It's hard to imagine a world before the development of what many consider to be miracle drugs; however, only 80 years ago antibiotics weren't available. The discovery of penicillin in 1928 by Alexander Fleming was one of the greatest scientific achievements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Some common illnesses, such as strep throat, are now easily treated with antibiotics, but in the past, they often led to serious complications. Antibiotics serve an important role in keeping the public healthy. Unfortunately, antibiotic resistance, or the increased ability of bacteria to survive in the presence of antibiotics, has become a major public health threat. We all need to help fight this threat. The first step is to understand that antibiotics only treat *bacterial* infections; they aren't effective against *viral* infections, like colds. So talk to your healthcare provider about the best treatment for your illness. When it's determined that your illness is caused by a virus, take your healthcare provider's recommendations for treating the symptoms. Get Smart: Know When Antibiotics Work.

*For the most accurate health information, visit [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or call 1-800-CDC-INFO, 24/7.*