

Say No to Infection Antimicrobial Resistance Fact Sheet



What is Antimicrobial Resistance?

Antibiotics are used to treat or prevent some types of bacterial infection. They work by killing bacteria or preventing them from spreading. But they do not work for everything e.g.

- Many mild bacterial infections get better on their own without using antibiotics.
- Antibiotics do not work for viral infections such as colds and flu, and most coughs and sore throats.

Antibiotics are no longer routinely used to treat:

- Chest infections
- Ear infections in children
- Sore throats

Antibiotic resistance is a big problem – taking antibiotics when you do not need them can mean they will not work for you in the future.

Antibiotic resistance and 'superbugs'

The overuse of antibiotics in recent years means they're becoming less effective and has led to the emergence of 'superbugs'. These are strains of bacteria that have developed resistance to many different types of antibiotics, including:

- MRSA (methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)
- Clostridioides *difficile* infection (*C.diff*)
- The bacteria that cause multi-drug resistant tuberculosis

These types of infections can be serious and challenging to treat and are becoming an increasing cause of disability and death across the world.

The biggest worry is that new strains of bacteria may emerge that cannot be treated by any existing antibiotics.

When antibiotics are needed

Antibiotics may be used to treat bacterial infections that:

- Are unlikely to clear up without antibiotics
- Could infect others
- Could take too long to clear without treatment
- Carry a risk of more serious complications
- People at a high risk of infection may also be given antibiotics as a precaution, known as antibiotic prophylaxis.

How to take antibiotics

Take antibiotics as directed on the packet or the patient information leaflet that comes with the medicine, or as instructed by your GP or pharmacist.

Antibiotics come as:

- Tablets, capsules, or a liquid that you drink – these can be used to treat most types of mild to moderate infections in the body.
- Creams, lotions, sprays and drops – these are often used to treat skin infections and eye or ear infections.
- Injections – these can be given as an injection or through a drip directly into the blood or muscle and are used for more serious infections.

[For further information on Antibiotic Resistance click the link](#)