

Antimicrobial Resistance

What can I do as a patient?

“Antimicrobial resistance poses a catastrophic threat. If we don’t act now, any one of us could go into hospital in 20 years for minor surgery and die because of an ordinary infection that can’t be treated by antibiotics.”

Professor Dame Sally Davies, England’s Chief Medical Officer

What can I do?

As more bacteria become resistant to treatment, we are in danger of running out of effective antibiotics. That means that diseases we thought were almost eradicated, such as tuberculosis, will soon be untreatable. Without antibiotics we cannot carry out operations like hip replacements or use chemotherapy safely.

- Overprescribing is a major cause of resistance to antibiotics. Every time you take antibiotics you risk making some bacteria resistant. Those resistant bacteria get passed on to other people, so everyone in your community becomes more likely to catch a resistant infection.
 - Don’t** ask for antibiotics for a cold or flu. These are caused by viruses, which cannot be killed by antibiotics.
 - Do** listen to advice from your doctor on controlling the symptoms of viral infections.
- Taking the wrong dose or missing a dose of antibiotics also contributes to increased resistance.
 - Don’t** stockpile old antibiotics for future use, or buy antibiotics from the internet.
 - Do** make sure you finish the whole course of medication, even if you feel better.
- Poor hand hygiene increases the chance of infection, and helps spread resistant bugs.
 - Don’t** be afraid to ask if your doctor or nurse has washed their hands before examining you.
 - Do** keep hand gel by your bed during hospital stays and make sure you and your visitors use it
- Lack of knowledge about antimicrobial resistance means that not enough is being done to tackle it.
 - Don’t** ignore the issue
 - Do** talk to people about the problem and educate friends and family about it

Go to www.imperial.ac.uk/hpruantimicrobialresistance for more information