

10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE FROM FARM TO YOU

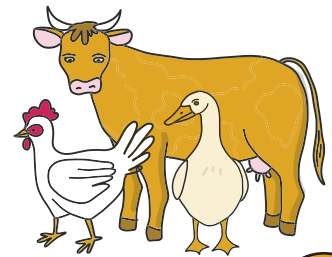
Every year, in the European Union, an estimated 25,000 patients die because of infections caused by antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

We humans are often told to go easy on antibiotics, but did you know that animals should too?

1

ANTIBIOTICS ARE USED MORE OFTEN TO TREAT ANIMALS THAN HUMANS

On average, in the European Union, consumption of antibiotics is higher in food-producing animals than in humans. In Spain, Cyprus, Italy and Germany for instance, use of antibiotics for farm animals was twice as high as for humans¹ in 2014.



2

GIVING ANTIBIOTICS TO HEALTHY ANIMALS CONTRIBUTES TO ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

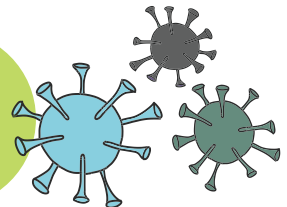
Farm animals are routinely given antibiotics, even when they are healthy, to prevent disease in crowded or unhygienic conditions. Such misuse and overuse spurs antibiotic resistance. Bacteria found in European poultry and pigs commonly exhibit resistance to one or even several antibiotics. 70% of *Campylobacter* bacteria found on poultry meat are resistant to an antibiotic widely used to treat joint infections or diarrhoea.²



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ANTIBIOTICS DO NOT KILL VIRUSES

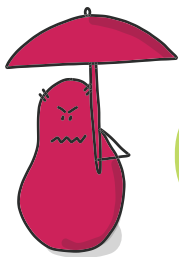
When you get an infection caused by a virus, such as a cold, flu, most sore throats, or bronchitis, antibiotics won't help you. Antibiotics work against bacterial infections such as pneumonia, tuberculosis or a urinary tract infection. Only your doctor can tell you if you need antibiotics. The same goes for animals, which should only be given antibiotics upon veterinary prescription.



4

IT IS BACTERIA -NOT HUMANS OR ANIMALS- THAT CAN RESIST ANTIBIOTICS

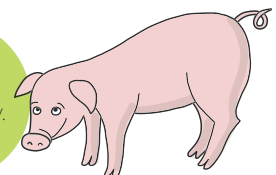
Many wrongly assume that humans or animals develop a resistance to antibiotics when we talk of antibiotic resistance. But it is in fact disease-causing bacteria that become resistant to antibiotics. These resistant bugs may then infect humans and animals, and the infections they cause are harder to treat than those caused by non-resistant bacteria.



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HOW DO BACTERIA BECOME RESISTANT TO ANTIBIOTICS?

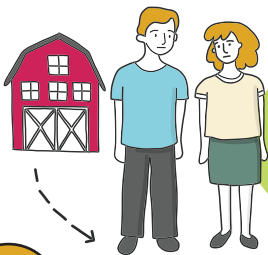
Either naturally or because they have mutated, some bacteria have genes which make them withstand the effects of antibiotics. They are known as 'superbugs'. While antibiotics kill most bacteria, superbugs survive and multiply - even more so when we use antibiotics incorrectly. These superbugs can transmit their resistance genes to other bacteria.



¹ ECDC, EFSA and EMA (2017). Second joint report on the integrated analysis of the consumption of antimicrobial agents and occurrence of antimicrobial resistance in bacteria from humans and food-producing animals (p. 31).

² EFSA and ECDC (2016). The European Union summary report on antimicrobial resistance in zoonotic and indicator bacteria from humans, animals and food in 2014.

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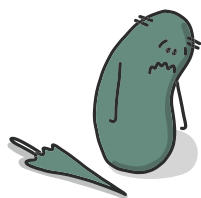
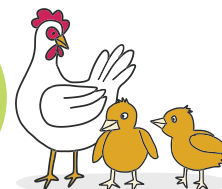
RESISTANT BACTERIA CAN SPREAD FROM FARM ANIMALS TO YOU

Resistant bacteria can travel from the farm to you in many different ways, and eating undercooked meat is one of them. Other transmission routes include contact with live farm animals carrying the bacteria, consumption of crops grown on soil that has been fertilised with manure from infected animals, as well as drinking water tainted with animal excrement.

7

EU FARMERS ARE NOT ALLOWED TO USE ANTIBIOTICS TO MAKE ANIMALS GROW FASTER

The regular feeding of cattle, pigs and chickens with low doses of antibiotics boosts their growth. While it makes meat production more profitable, it increases the risk of antibiotic resistance as bacteria are exposed to non-lethal doses of antibiotics. Unlike countries such as the United States or China, the EU banned this practice in 2006. Tighter checks might be needed though, to verify that the ban is properly enforced.



LESS ANTIBIOTICS IN LIVESTOCK DECREASES ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE

Countries (particularly in Northern Europe) where governments have acted to reduce the use of antibiotics in farm animals show decreasing levels of antibiotic resistance. This means that bacteria are gradually losing their resistance to antibiotics, which are becoming effective again. However, some EU countries are lagging behind in the fight against antibiotic resistance from farming. For instance, the sale of antibiotics for food-producing animals was 36 times higher in Spain than in Sweden³ in 2014.

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RESISTANT BACTERIA KNOW NO BORDERS

Antibiotic resistance is rising to dangerously high levels in all parts of the world. Bacteria – resistant or not – know no borders and move between countries, species, food, etc. Combatting antibiotic resistance requires action at all levels of society, from individuals through the agriculture sector to policy-makers in Europe and beyond.



A CLEAN KITCHEN LESSENS THE RISK OF CONTAMINATION WITH RESISTANT BACTERIA

Always defrost meat in the fridge.

When you cook, make sure to always wash your hands after handling raw meat, especially before you touch food to be eaten raw or any kitchen utensils such as chopping boards and plates.

Don't forget to cook your meat thoroughly as bacteria, even resistant ones, are destroyed by cooking.



10

Better farm hygiene, rules to prohibit the routine preventive use of antibiotics in farm animals and less stressful conditions for animals would help reduce the need for antibiotics.

So consumer organisations across Europe urge European leaders to act.

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