



# Antibiotic resistance

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## Key facts

- Antibiotic resistance is one of the biggest threats to global health, food security, and development today.
- Antibiotic resistance can affect anyone, of any age, in any country.
- Antibiotic resistance occurs naturally, but misuse of antibiotics in humans and animals is accelerating the process.
- A growing number of infections – such as pneumonia, tuberculosis, gonorrhoea, and salmonellosis – are becoming harder to treat as the antibiotics used to treat them become less effective.
- Antibiotic resistance leads to longer hospital stays, higher medical costs and increased mortality.

## Introduction

Antibiotics are medicines used to prevent and treat bacterial infections. Antibiotic resistance occurs when bacteria change in response to the use of these medicines.

Bacteria, not humans or animals, become antibiotic-resistant. These bacteria may infect humans and animals, and the infections they cause are harder to treat than those caused by non-resistant bacteria.

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## Policy makers

To prevent and control the spread of antibiotic resistance, policy makers can:

- Ensure a robust national action plan to tackle antibiotic resistance is in place.
- Improve surveillance of antibiotic-resistant infections.
- Strengthen policies, programmes, and implementation of infection prevention and control measures.
- Regulate and promote the appropriate use and disposal of quality medicines.
- Make information available on the impact of antibiotic resistance.

## Health professionals

To prevent and control the spread of antibiotic resistance, health professionals can:

- Prevent infections by ensuring your hands, instruments, and environment are clean.
- Only prescribe and dispense antibiotics when they are needed, according to current guidelines.
- Report antibiotic-resistant infections to surveillance teams.
- Talk to your patients about how to take antibiotics correctly, antibiotic resistance and the dangers of misuse.
- Talk to your patients about preventing infections (for example, vaccination, hand washing, safer sex, and covering nose and mouth when sneezing).

## Healthcare industry

To prevent and control the spread of antibiotic resistance, the health industry can:

- Invest in research and development of new antibiotics, vaccines, diagnostics and other tools.

## Agriculture sector

To prevent and control the spread of antibiotic resistance, the agriculture sector can:

- Only give antibiotics to animals under veterinary supervision.
- Not use antibiotics for growth promotion or to prevent diseases in healthy animals.
- Vaccinate animals to reduce the need for antibiotics and use alternatives to antibiotics when available.
- Promote and apply good practices at all steps of production and processing of foods from animal and plant sources.
- Improve biosecurity on farms and prevent infections through improved hygiene and animal welfare.

## Recent developments

Held annually since 2015, WAAW is a global campaign that aims to increase awareness of antimicrobial resistance worldwide and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections. Antimicrobials are critical tools in helping to fight diseases in humans, animals and plants. They include antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiprotozoa. WAAW takes place every year from 18 to 24 November. The slogan has previously been, “Antibiotics: Handle with Care” but changed to “Antimicrobials: Handle with Care” in 2020 to reflect the broadening scope of drug resistant infections.

## **The Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS)**

The WHO-supported system supports a standardized approach to the collection, analysis and sharing of data related to antimicrobial resistance at a global level to inform decision-making, drive local, national and regional action.

## **Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership (GARDP)**

A joint initiative of WHO and Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi), GARDP encourages research and development through public-private partnerships. By 2023, the partnership aims to develop and deliver up to four new treatments, through improvement of existing antibiotics and acceleration of the entry of new antibiotic drugs.

## **Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (IACG)**

The United Nations Secretary-General has established IACG to improve coordination between international organizations and to ensure effective global action against this threat to health security. The IACG is co-chaired by the UN Deputy Secretary-General and the Director General of WHO and comprises high level representatives of relevant UN agencies, other international organizations, and individual experts across different sectors.

## **Antimicrobial resistance**

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