

Newsletter

World Antimicrobial Awareness

World Antimicrobial Awareness Week

Introduction

Every year, World Antimicrobial Awareness Week aims to increase awareness of global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to encourage best practices among the general public, healthcare workers, and policymakers, to stop the further emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections.

As resistance grows to a wider range of drugs the World Health Organization (WHO) has broadened the focus of this campaign from antibiotics to include all antimicrobials.

What is antimicrobial resistance?
AMR occurs when bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites change over time, after being exposed to antimicrobial drugs. These changes can mean that they become resistant to the drugs used to treat them. This makes common infections harder to treat and increases the risk of disease spread, severe illness and death.

Why is antimicrobial resistance increasing?

- **Misuse and over-use of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants** - Misuse and over-use of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant infections.
- **Lack of access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene for both humans and animals** - Lack of clean water and sanitation in healthcare facilities, farms and community settings, and inadequate infection prevention and control,

promotes the emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections.

- **COVID-19** - The misuse of antibiotics during the COVID-19 pandemic could lead to accelerated emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance - **COVID-19 is caused by a virus, not by bacteria.** Therefore, antibiotics should not be used to prevent or treat viral infections, unless the patient has a proven bacterial co-infection.

What can the general public do to reduce the impact and limit the spread of AMR?

- Prevent infections by practicing good personal and food hygiene, avoid close contact with people who are ill, and keep up to date with vaccinations.
- Only use antimicrobials when it is prescribed by a healthcare professional.
- Complete the full course of prescribed medication, even if they start to feel better.
- Never share antimicrobials with other people.
- Never taking left-over medication from someone else.



What can healthcare workers do to reduce the impact and limit the spread of AMR?

- Prevent infections by ensuring that hands, instruments and the environment are clean.
- Keep your patients' vaccinations up to date.
- Where possible, test to confirm whether antimicrobials (and which one) are truly indicated.
- Only prescribe antimicrobials when they are truly needed.
- Prescribe appropriate antimicrobials at the correct dose and for the correct duration.
- Talk to your patients about preventing infections, how to take antimicrobials correctly, antimicrobial resistance and the dangers of misuse.





Practice good hygiene at all times!

Hand hygiene is crucial in this time of COVID-19. Practice good hand hygiene at home and in healthcare settings by regularly washing your hands. Sneeze and cough into a bent elbow, or a tissue that should be thrown into a closed bin. These are some of the most effective ways of reducing the spread of many infections, including antibiotic-resistant bacteria.



Over-prescribing of antibiotics



Patients not finishing their treatment



Poor infection control in hospitals and clinics



Lack of hygiene and poor sanitation



Over-use of antibiotics in livestock, fish and crop farming



Lack of new antibiotics being developed

References

- World Health Organization. World antimicrobial awareness week 2021. Available at: <https://www.who.int/campaigns/world-antimicrobial-awareness-week/2021> [Accessed 10 November 2021]
- World Health Organization. Antibiotic resistance fact sheet, July 2020. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antibiotic-resistance> [Accessed 10 November 2021]