



EUROPEAN ANTIBIOTIC AWARENESS DAY



A EUROPEAN
HEALTH INITIATIVE

European Antibiotics Awareness Day Communications Information Pack 18 November 2023

www.hse.ie/infectioncontrol

www.antibioticprescribing.ie

[**#KeepAntibioticsWorking**](https://twitter.com/KeepAntibioticsWorking)



Antimicrobial Resistance
and Infection Control Team



Background

Every day antibiotic resistance is making people suffer more and die younger than they need to. We know that every year many people in Europe die earlier from antibiotic resistance infection (there is no exact number for this for any country in Europe including Ireland.)

Antibiotics were the wonder drugs of the last century; the magic bullets. We got better at making antibiotics in bulk and doing it cheaply. For more than 50 years most countries in the world have been using vast amounts of antibiotics in people, in animals and in forestry. Nearly every time we kill bacteria with antibiotics most of them die but a tiny few survive and multiply. This is because they happen to have a genetic trick up their sleeve that blocks the antibiotic. Years of using lots of antibiotics around the world have left us with a world where those antibiotic resistant superbug numbers are increasing in people, in animals and the environment (water and soil).

Over all those years of overusing antibiotics people have started to live longer because of better living conditions. We have also got much better at helping people with diseases that were rapidly fatal to live some good quality extra years. The price of that progress is more people vulnerable to infection and more people who need high tech healthcare. A lot of the progress in treatment depends on protecting vulnerable people from infection during their treatment using antibiotics. We now risk losing a lot of the progress because our antibiotics do not work so well. There are superbugs in existence (e.g. MRSA, VRE, ESBL and CPE) that are resistant to many of the antibiotics we have. There is also very little progress in the development of new antibiotics.

It is an important part of this year's campaign that we continue to highlight that antibiotics do not work to treat viruses (including colds, flu, COVID-19 etc).

Target audiences

- Patients/service users
- HSE prescribing staff in community and hospital settings
- GPs, dentists and pharmacists (relevant GMS contractors)
- Department of Health
- Key agencies e.g. IPU, ICGP, Royal Colleges etc.
- Relevant stakeholders

How can you help?

- We are promoting a social media campaign to highlight awareness of European Antibiotic Awareness Day with a focus on: Correct use of antibiotics and antibiotics myths <https://fb.me/1PSYoRtcDKWTtuN>
- Side effects https://www.youtube.com/shorts/qj2X7t_CM0c
- Exam stress <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/0F65YHoYLJc>
- AMRIC Clinical Lead welcomes EAAD

You can access the videos on the HSE YouTube account by clicking the links above. We are asking for your continued support to share the videos, talk about antibiotic resistance, promote proper use of antibiotics and highlight prescribing guidelines www.antibioticprescribing.ie to



prescribers. We would be grateful if you could point patients and service users to www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ as it provides information on managing simple illnesses without antibiotics. We would like if you could share and comment on our videos (shared above) social media posts, and to challenge day-to-day misinformation about antimicrobial resistance.

There are three ways you can support us:

1 Messaging

It is valuable to share consistent messages, and our communications team has created some, images and social media posts that encapsulate some key points:

- Take care of yourself and learn to treat common illnesses that do not require antibiotics www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/
- Antibiotics can cause more harm than good if taken unnecessarily
- COVID-19, influenza, colds are viral infections – antibiotics do not work for virus infection
- Winter vaccines, including the COVID-19, influenza and needle-free childhood influenza vaccines are effective against their target viruses
- If you do need antibiotics take them as prescribed by your prescriber
- For prescribers; prescribe antibiotics as set out on www.antibioticprescribing.ie or on hospital/community guidelines and be aware of the red/green antibiotic prescribing programme.

2 Media

Contained in this pack are the HSE press release and examples of content which can be tweeted or posted on EAAD and the days before/after.

3 Sharing

Please let your members, colleagues or staff know about the videos (shared above), www.antibioticprescribing.ie , www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ and the communications materials that are available.

Media Relations

If you do not have access to a clinical spokesperson, the HSE can provide clinical spokespeople from the national Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control team (AMRIC) to support the media campaign.



Social Media

We welcome your support in promoting the key messages of the campaign by tweeting or retweeting, posting or sharing and engaging with the content listed below on your social media platforms. The tweets will commence on 15th November with an average of 1/2 tweets per day until 24th November. Please show your support by liking/sharing on twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook and Instagram.



Hashtag: #KeepAntibioticsWorking

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/HSELive>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/HSElive>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/health-service-executive/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/irishhealthservice/>

| Date | Tweet | Image/video | Web link |
|------|---|--|--|
| 15th | <p>European Antibiotics Awareness Day 18th November. Your body can fight most infections, antibiotics are only needed for bacterial infections.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | <p>Get better without unnecessary antibiotics, visit #EAAD #KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | <p>www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/</p> |
| 16th | <p>Antibiotics are great when you need them but can do more harm than good if they are not required. Only use antibiotics when prescribed by your doctor.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> |  | <p>www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/</p> |
| 17th | <p>Many antibiotics are no longer effective against some bacteria – which mean more disease for us to fight. Using antibiotics only when needed can help stop this happening</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> |  | <p>https://www2.hse.ie/healthcare-associated-infections/</p> |

| Date | Tweet | Image/video | Web link |
|------|---|------------------------|---|
| 18th | <p>Did you know? 1 in 7 people may have a side effect from an antibiotic. Only take them when prescribed by a doctor</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | | https://www2.hse.ie/healthcare-associated-infections/ |
| 18th | <p>Get better without unnecessary antibiotics – visit www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ for information on healing and soothing yourself while you're ill</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | | www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ |
| 19th | <p>Using antibiotics when they're not needed helps superbugs grow, some superbugs can make you very sick – skip the antibiotics unless prescribed, and get better by yourself.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | <p>Superbugs video</p> | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOVQNhG8tOQ |

| Date | Tweet | Image/video | Web link |
|------|--|--------------------------|---|
| 21st | <p>If your doctor says you don't need an antibiotic, that's ok. Many common illnesses don't require an antibiotic. Your body will be able to fight off the infection on its own.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | | https://www2.hse.ie/healthcare-associated-infections/ |
| 22nd | <p>Many antibiotics are no longer effective against some bacteria. By limiting our use of antibiotics, we can</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | <p>Antibiotics video</p> | https://youtu.be/xjE1IX7GNBI |
| 23rd | <p>You have trillions of good bugs that help keep you well. Be nice to them. Your GP will only prescribe antibiotics when you need to treat a bacterial infection. Follow the instructions for correct use of prescribed antibiotics.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | | |
| 24th | <p>Remember that antibiotics don't work on viruses, like COVID19, colds and flu. Taking them when you don't need them may make you even sicker with no benefit for you.</p> <p>#KeepAntibioticsWorking</p> | | www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ |





Suggested social media images



**BACTERIA
BECOME
RESISTANT
NOT US**



ANTIBIOTICS WERE
FIRST DISCOVERED
NEARLY 100 YEARS AGO
**ONLY THROUGH
RESPONSIBLE USE**
WILL THEY BE
EFFECTIVE
FOR ANOTHER
100 YEARS



**THINK YOU NEED
AN ANTIBIOTIC?
THINK AGAIN.**

Antibiotics do not treat
a lot of common illnesses.

Talk to a pharmacist.
Get advice. Get better.



Taking antibiotics when you don't need them
can harm your health and cause superbugs.
Antibiotics don't treat COVID-19 or
other viral infections.



Antibiotics should only be taken when **absolutely necessary**.

They can cause harm and can have serious side effects for adults and children:

- Rash
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Diarrhoea
- Thrush
- Can cause superbugs



If your doctor says you don't need an antibiotic, that's ok. Many common illnesses don't require an antibiotic. Your body will be able to fight the infection on its own.



If your doctor says you don't need an antibiotic, **that's ok.**

Many common illnesses don't require an antibiotic. Your body will be able to fight off the infection on its own.

Taking antibiotics when you don't need them can harm your health and cause superbugs. Antibiotics don't treat COVID-19 or other viral infections.

How to cope with winter illnesses and why it's a good thing if your doctor says you don't need an antibiotic



We are all worrying a little bit more this year about the kids getting sick. As well as COVID-19, viruses like croup RSV, tend to be commonplace around autumn and winter. It can be hard to know how to mind everybody. Dr Paul Ryan, GP gives advice about managing illnesses this winter.

The most important thing to do if your child is unwell is to keep them home from school or crèche to stop infections spreading in our communities.

Most common illnesses are caused by viral infections and do not require an antibiotic. Our bodies can fight off these infections without antibiotics. Young children may get 6-7 viral infections each year mainly in the autumn and winter months. The good news is that there is lots of information available to help you cope with common illnesses this winter.

For information on how to protect your child from common winter illnesses, check out the www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ and MyChild.ie where you'll find lots of helpful information about everyday illnesses like colds, coughs, croup, flu, earache and sore throats and how your own immune system is enough to help you get better.

Vaccination is a great way to protect your child from certain infections. This is the time of year when flu starts to circulate and children are twice as likely as adults to catch the flu, which can sometimes cause serious illness. The good news is that the **nasal spray flu vaccine** is available for free for all children aged 2-12 years and children aged 13-17 at high risk of flu from participating GP practices and pharmacies. It's a safe and effective way to protect them, and the rest of your family too. You can make an appointment with your GP or a local participating pharmacist. You can find out more at www.hse.ie/flu

Antibiotics do not treat common viruses including the flu, COVID-19 or colds. Taking antibiotics when you do not need them can cause you unnecessary harm. About one in seven people who take antibiotics develop side effects, such as a rash, upset stomach or diarrhoea.

If we have an infection caused by bacteria like pneumonia or a kidney infection antibiotics can be of benefit, so we can accept the side effects that go with them. However if we have an infection



caused by a virus, like coughs, colds, flus and sore throats, we might get side effects but for zero benefit because antibiotics do not treat viral illness.

Antibiotics will not relieve pain or fever caused by viral infections – for this; you will need to take paracetamol or ibuprofen.

Antibiotics will not ease a cough unless the cough is from pneumonia, which thankfully is uncommon. If you are unsure, you can talk to your pharmacist for cough medicines or try warm honey and lemon drinks. Remember that honey is not suitable for child under 1 year of age. You can cough for up to 3 weeks after a viral infection.

Taking antibiotics when you do not need them means that they might not work for you when you do need them. Antibiotics have been overused in recent years and bacteria are becoming resistant to the antibiotics used to treat them. This means that some common antibiotics no longer work as well as they used to and that some of them don't work for certain infections anymore. Also, some bacteria have changed. This means some antibiotics that were used to treat them no longer work very well.

We need to use antibiotics in the right way to slow down antibiotic resistance. This will help them remain effective for us and our children.

You can help prevent antibiotic resistance by:

- not asking for antibiotics to treat viral infections, including COVID-19, colds and flu
- taking antibiotic doses as prescribed and only when you need them
- cleaning your hands regularly before and after preparing or eating food
- knowing how to treat and recover from common viral illnesses

You can find more information about everyday illnesses like colds, coughs, flu, earaches and sore throats don't need an antibiotic on the www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ and MyChild.ie.



PRESS RELEASE – EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01 18TH NOVEMBER

Marking European Antibiotic Awareness Day

18th November is European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD). This is an annual event to remind everyone how valuable antibiotics are, how important it is that we only use them when we need them and to highlight that these amazing drugs are under threat from the growing problem of antibiotic resistance.

Dr. Eimear Brannigan, HSE National Clinical Lead for Antimicrobial Resistance and Infection Control says, “Antibiotics are amazing drugs that eliminate bacteria but are usually very safe for us. We have become dependent on antibiotics for many of our routine operations, treatments and for critical surgery such as transplants, cancer treatment and many, many illnesses.”

Unfortunately over the last 100 years or so people have used a lot of antibiotics in people, in animals and on crops when they were not appropriate. Because of all the antibiotic use many bacteria have changed so that they no longer work as well as did 20 years ago. This is known as antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics can cause more harm than good if taken unnecessarily. Most common illnesses, including COVID-19, influenza and colds are viral infections – antibiotics do not work for viral infection.

Dr. Scott Walkin, GP and ICGP lead for Antimicrobial Resistance says, “A key message of EAAD is to use antibiotics only when they are likely to help someone who is sick get better. Antibiotics do not help you to get better any quicker if the infection is caused by a virus. As a GP I still get some requests for antibiotics from people who have colds and flus or for their children. Antibiotics will not help them and in fact can cause side effects like upset tummies, nausea or skin rash. It is safer for you not to take an antibiotic you do not need, because antibiotics, like all medicines, can have side effects. Vaccination reduces many viral infections, so it is important for us all to be fully vaccinated.”

The HSE, in partnership with general practitioners and pharmacists has a website which gives practical, common sense advice and information on dealing with many common illnesses like colds, flu, earaches, sore throats, tummy bugs and rashes www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/ provides sound advice to give us the confidence and skill we need to take care of ourselves and our families without resorting to antibiotics.

| How long will my illness last | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Earache | Most get better by 3-7 days |
| Sore throat | Most get better by 7 – 8 days |
| Cold | Most get better by 14 days |
| Cough | Most get better by 21 days |

The most effective weapon against common viral infections is your body’s immune system. The best way to treat symptoms of most common viral infections is rest, drink fluids and take paracetamol or ibuprofen. It is still important to get checked by your GP if you are worried especially for very young children, older people and those with long-term medical conditions or whose immune system is suppressed.



Your GP will be able to judge if you are likely to have an infection that needs treatment with an antibiotic. If your GP says you do not need an antibiotic this is good news because antibiotics should only be taken for when you need them to treat a bacterial infection.

Ends

Key messages for EAAD 2023

- Antibiotics can cause more harm than good if taken unnecessarily
- COVID-19, influenza, colds are viral infections – antibiotics will not work for viral infections and may cause side effects like stomach upsets, headaches, rashes, nausea
- The public health measures to stop the spread of COVID-19 will also stop the spread of usual winter viruses that cause coughs, colds, sore throats, earache and flu
- Winter vaccines, including the COVID-19, influenza and needle-free childhood influenza vaccines are effective against their target viruses
- If you do need to take antibiotics, take them as prescribed; contact your healthcare worker if you have any serious side effects
- Take care of yourself and learn to treat common illnesses that do not require antibiotics use www.hse.ie/conditions/common-illnesses/
- Never share antibiotics or take them without a prescription
- Stay home if feeling unwell

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