



Antibiotic Resistance

What is antibiotic resistance?

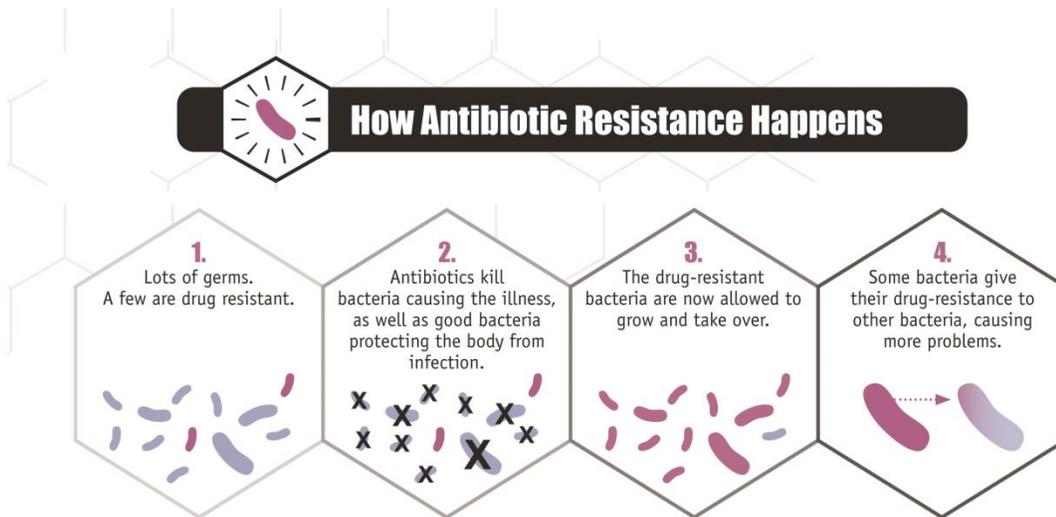
Antibiotic resistance occurs when one or more antibiotics can no longer treat an infection. Infections can be caused by different types of germs (bacteria, fungi, or viruses). In the United States, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention have identified 18 bacteria and fungi that developed antibiotic resistance and currently pose a threat.

Why is antibiotic resistance a concern?

Since antibiotics were first used in the 1940's, they have saved millions of lives. However, bacteria have shown the ability to become resistant to every antibiotic developed in the last 70 years. Not only are resistant germs tougher to fight, patients with resistant infections are at a higher risk for disability or death. Antibiotic resistance is also a major economic concern in the United States, adding billions of dollars in additional care and treatment.

Limited Resource

The more antibiotics we use today, the fewer we will have tomorrow. Antibiotic use is the single most important factor leading to antibiotic resistance. As we use more antibiotics, more resistance will develop. This will severely limit our ability to treat infectious diseases and perform complicated medical procedures that require antibiotics.



Combating Antibiotic Resistance

Preventing Spread:

Preventing the spread of infection will reduce the amount of antibiotics needed and reduce the likelihood that resistance will develop. Ask your doctor if you are up-to-date on your immunizations. Wash your hands regularly, especially if you are visiting the doctor's office or hospital. Make sure your doctor or nurse washes their hands before touching you.

Use Antibiotics as Prescribed:

Up to half of antibiotic use in humans is unnecessary. Remember that antibiotics are only effective against bacteria and some fungi. Antibiotics will not work against viruses. Your doctor may believe you are sick from a virus and will not prescribe an antibiotic. If your doctor does prescribe an antibiotic, be sure to complete all of your medicine. Even if you are feeling better, some germs may still be living inside you.

