

ANTIBIOTICS

Use them wise and only on advice

Antibiotic resistance and how to prevent it

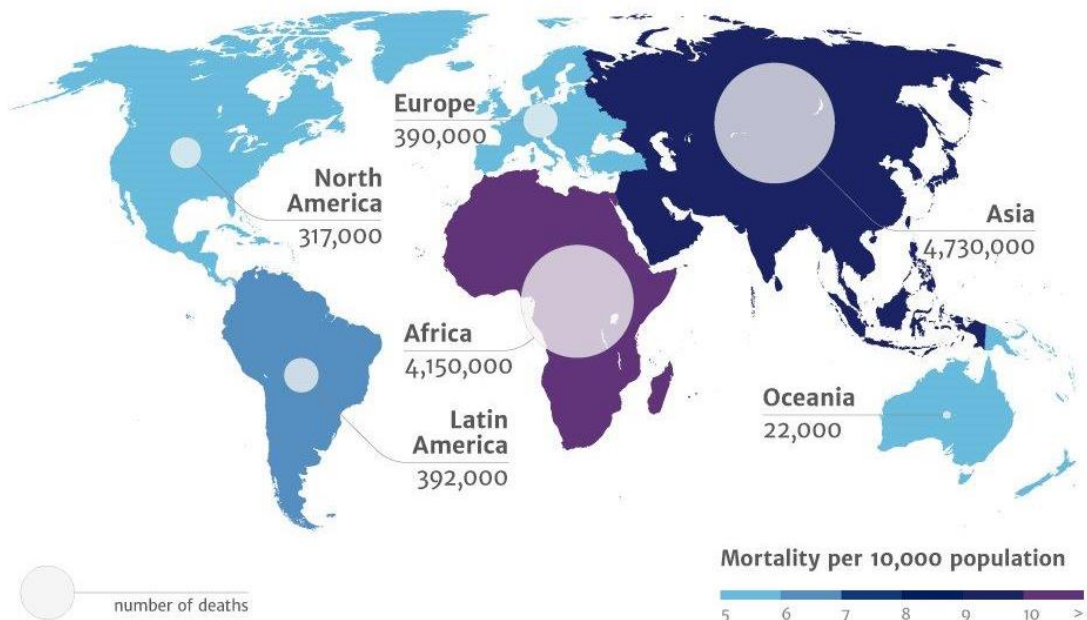
Antibiotics are drugs that either kill or inhibit the growth of bacteria. Antibiotics are therefore of great importance in the treatment of bacterial infections. Being faced with a bacterial infection, we take it for granted that there always will be an antibiotic that will be able to cure us. But there might come a day where things will be different.

Not so long ago, there were no antibiotics and infectious diseases were often lethal. Alexander Fleming accidentally discovered the antibiotic Penicillin in 1928. Since 1940 antibiotics have significantly reduced illness and death from bacterial infections. But now it seems we might be going back to the pre-antibiotic era.

More and more bacteria are becoming resistant to antibiotics. Though it is inevitable that all known antibiotics will lose their ability to kill disease-causing bacteria over time, we are significantly speeding up the process with underuse, overuse, and misuse of these antibiotics. It is essential that the building up of resistance to antibiotics slows down in order for antibiotics not to lose their efficacy.

Production improvements gave us less expensive antibiotics, which in its turn encouraged nonprescription and off-label uses. In addition to causing drug resistance, these unadapted practices introduced unnecessary side effects such as diarrhea, skin rashes, mycotic infections... These complications of antibiotic therapy can have serious outcomes, even death.

Death due to resistant infections in 2050



(Source: <https://amr-review.org/infographics.html>)

How can we prevent antibiotic resistance?

Patients can:

- Take antibiotics exactly as the doctor prescribes and not skip doses.
- Complete the prescribed treatment, even when feeling better.
- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you. Antibiotics treat specific types of infections. Taking the wrong medicine may allow bacteria to multiply and delay healing.
- Do not save antibiotics for the next illness. Discard any leftover medication once the prescribed course of treatment is completed.
- Do not ask for antibiotics when your doctor doesn't think you need them. Remember that antibiotics have side effects.
- Prevent infections by practicing good hand hygiene and getting recommended vaccines.

Healthcare practitioners can:

- REDUCE UNNECESSARY USE: do not prescribe antibiotics for viral infections or other diseases where antibiotics don't work.
- PROMOTE APPROPRIATE USE: give clear instructions to patients on how to take the antibiotics prescribed. E.g. saying: "take the drug 3 times a day", is not the same as saying; "the drug should be taken every 8 hours".
- PRESCRIBE ANTIBIOTICS CORRECTLY: take cultures, start the right drug at the right dose for the right duration. Reassess the prescription within 48 hours based on tests and patient exam.
- Stay aware of antibiotic resistance patterns in your facility.
- Follow hand hygiene and other infection control measures with every patient.

Use them wise and only on advice

To check your knowledge on antibiotics, you should definitely do the test at:

www.who.int/campaigns/world-antibiotic-awareness-week/quiz/en

Sources

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