

Department of Health Key Messages

Antibiotic Resistance - EU Antibiotic Awareness Day 18 Nov

Key Messages – general

- Antibiotics are losing their effectiveness at an increasing rate.
- Bacteria can adapt and find ways to survive the effects of an antibiotic. They become 'antibiotic resistant' so that the antibiotic no longer works. The more you use an antibiotic, the more bacteria become resistant to it.
- It is important we use antibiotics in the right way, at the right dose, at the right time, to slow down the development of antibiotic resistance.
- There are very few new antibiotics in the development pipeline, which is why it is important we use our existing antibiotics wisely and make sure these life-saving medicines continue to stay effective for ourselves and future generations.
- Many antibiotics are prescribed and used for mild infections when they don't need to be. Colds and most coughs, sinusitis, otitis media (earache) and sore throats often get better without antibiotics.

Key Messages – strategy

- Antibiotic resistance is a complex global public health issue. To tackle it effectively requires an integrated approach at a national, European and international level.
- The UK is signed-up to the WHO European Strategic Action Plan on Antibiotic Resistance which encourages sharing of information, developing effective interventions to prevent and slow down the development of multi-resistant bacteria, and working together to stimulate the development of new drugs and diagnostics.
- In England, we have an integrated strategy that includes surveillance of antibiotic resistant infections, promoting responsible prescribing and use of antibiotics, and good infection control measures to prevent their spread.

Key Messages – EAAD 18 Nov

- European Antibiotic Awareness Day on 18 November is a European-wide annual event that aims to raise awareness on how to use antibiotics in a responsible way that will help keep them effective for the future.
- GPs continue to be encouraged to only prescribe antibiotics when they are needed and not for self-limiting mild infections such as colds and most coughs, sinusitis, earache and sore throats.
- For EAAD, the Royal College of General Practitioners is promoting a new web based toolkit to assist primary care prescribers.
- Department of Health videos are being screened nationally by Life Channel throughout GP surgeries around the EAAD period, reminding the public that antibiotics do not work on colds, most coughs and sore throats.
- The Department of Health has also published a range of other materials on its website to support local EAAD activities. <http://www.dh.gov.uk/health/tag/eaad/>
- EAAD was initiated by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in 2008 and is held on 18 November every year.

Patients – additional messages

- Antibiotics are important medicines and should only be taken when prescribed by a health professional. They should be for the right drug at the right dose and at the right time, and taken for the right duration.
- When antibiotics are prescribed by a health professional it is important that you always take it as directed, a lower dose or twice instead of three times daily may not be effective and encourages resistance to develop.
- Antibiotics can upset the natural balance of bacteria in your body. This allows other more harmful bacteria to increase. This may result in diarrhoea and thrush.
- Antibiotic resistant bacteria don't just infect you, they can spread to other people in close contact with you.

Prescriber – additional messages

- When antibiotic treatment is needed, the antibiotic should be tailored for the patient, the likely site of infection and causative organism.
- Patients receiving antibiotics should receive the right drug, at the right dose, and at the right time and the right duration for the individual.

- Unnecessary lengthy duration of antibiotic treatment and inappropriate use of broad-spectrum antibiotics should be avoided.
- Communication is key. Studies show that patients are less likely to ask their GP for antibiotics if advised what to expect in the course of an illness and given a self-care plan.

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