

Antimicrobial resistance

Information for parents and teachers

What are antimicrobials?

Microbes are tiny organisms that are all around us, including bacteria, viruses and fungi.

Microbes are important and useful for us, but some can make us sick.

Antimicrobials are medicines used to treat infections caused by these microbes. They include antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals and antiparasitics.

What is antimicrobial resistance?

Antimicrobial resistance or AMR happens when microbes change over time and the medicines used to treat them no longer work. If the antimicrobial medicines don't work, this makes infections harder, or sometimes impossible, to treat.

Why does antimicrobial resistance happen?

Antimicrobial resistance happens when microbes develop defences to stop treatment working effectively.

This can be caused by using antimicrobial medicines, like antibiotics, too much or when we don't need them.

Why is antimicrobial resistance a problem?

Antimicrobial resistance means infections that were once easy to cure are becoming harder to treat.

People with infections caused by resistant bacteria can take longer to get better.

Antimicrobial resistance is a risk for humans, animals and our environment. It is happening all over the world.

There are things we can do to reduce antimicrobial resistance:

1. Prevent getting sick by regularly washing your hands with soap and water.
2. Understand that antibiotics only work against bacteria. They do not work against viruses like colds and flu.
3. Don't pressure your health professional for antibiotics if they say you don't need them.
4. Only take antimicrobials when they are prescribed for you.
5. Return any unused antimicrobials, like antibiotics, to a pharmacy.

