

I want to know more about antibiotics and resistance

In short

- Antibiotics are medicines that help stop infections caused by bacteria.
- By taking the same antibiotics too often, bacteria can become insensitive.
This is called resistance.
- The antibiotics used then no longer help against the bacteria.
- Take antibiotics correctly.
This will prevent bacteria from becoming insensitive.

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What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are medicines that help stop infections caused by bacteria. But antibiotics don't work for all infections.

There are different types of infections:

- Most infections are caused by a virus, like with a cold or flu.
- Some infections are caused by bacteria, such as pneumonia, a bladder infection and some STDs.
- Sometimes a viral infection can be further infected by bacteria. This can happen with an infection in the throat, lungs, ear or eye. The bacteria make the infection worse. This can make the fever worse or bring the fever back after it has been gone for a few days.

How do antibiotics work?

Antibiotics work well against bacterial infections. The antibiotics kill the bacteria or slow their growth.

Antibiotics don't work against viral infections, like a cold or flu. That is why the doctor does not give you antibiotics for these.

There are many types of antibiotics. Like penicillin, for example. Each type of antibiotic works against different bacteria.

Bacteria are becoming insensitive (resistant)

If antibiotics are used against bacteria often, the bacteria can become resistant. The bacteria are then no longer sensitive to these antibiotics. If you then develop an infection from the insensitive bacteria, antibiotics will no longer help. You could become very ill. Sometimes other antibiotics can still help.

More and more bacteria are resistant. This is because people take antibiotics when it isn't necessary. In some countries, you can buy antibiotics without a doctor's prescription.

Resistant bacteria

The MRSA bacteria is an example of insensitive bacteria. Many antibiotics no longer help against MRSA bacteria.

People who have been treated in a hospital abroad sometimes bring the bacteria back with them to the Netherlands.

If you have been treated in a hospital abroad and need to be treated at a hospital in the Netherlands in the next few months, you will first be tested for MRSA bacteria.

How do I prevent bacteria from becoming resistant to antibiotics?

Take antibiotics properly. This prevents bacteria from becoming resistant to antibiotics.

Pay attention to the following:

- Take the antibiotics at the times stated on the prescription.
- Never stop the antibiotics without asking your doctor first.
- Do not take old leftover antibiotics, either yours or someone else's.
- Do not take antibiotics abroad without a prescription. First see a doctor in the country you are visiting.



More information about antibiotics?

You can find more information about antibiotics on the [RIVM](https://www.rivm.nl) site.

You can find more information about medicines on [apotheek.nl](https://www.apotheek.nl). Talk to your doctor or pharmacist about how to take your medicine.