

# Antibiotics: handle with care!



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Dear [hospital manager],

As part of the Europe-wide efforts to keep antibiotics working, we are contacting you to call for your support in fighting the alarming rise of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance threatens patient health and safety in all healthcare settings in Europe, and the emergence of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics (multidrug-resistant bacteria) is particularly concerning.

Infections with multidrug-resistant bacteria can be severe, fatal and costly, and they can lead to delayed access to effective antibiotic therapy for individual patients, causing treatment failures, longer illnesses, prolonged stays in hospital and increased morbidity and mortality, as well as higher direct and indirect hospital costs.

Did you know that **up to half** of all antibiotic use in hospitals is unnecessary or inappropriate?

As a hospital manager, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- Support your **multidisciplinary antibiotic stewardship team** by designating the specific leaders for accountability and drug expertise, and by stating the supportive roles of other key groups;
- Prioritise **antibiotic stewardship and infection prevention and control policies**, as well as strategies and activities that support prudent antibiotic use and prevent the spread of antibiotic-resistant bacteria;
- Provide **funds and resources for an antibiotic stewardship programme** (including e.g. salaries for dedicated staff, IT capabilities, rapid and point-of-care diagnostic tests);
- Fund and **promote educational activities**, training, and meetings about antibiotic stewardship and antibiotic resistance for all healthcare professionals (physicians, infectious disease specialists, pharmacists, microbiologists and nursing staff);
- **Strengthen surveillance activities** for antibiotic use and antibiotic resistance;
- Promote **compliance with evidence-based guidelines** for diagnosing and managing common infections, and for perioperative antibiotic prophylaxis. If these guidelines do not exist in your hospital, then support their development;
- Promote **compliance with evidence-based guidelines** for infection control measures, to reduce transmission of antibiotic-resistant bacteria;
- Promote **proactive audits** and ensure that individual prescribers receive feedback;
- Promote **peer-review of antibiotic prescriptions and infection management**, and encourage communication among healthcare professionals.

To further support your efforts in promoting prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital, we have prepared a number of information and educational materials. These include factsheets, a PowerPoint presentation, posters, checklists, leaflets and factsheets. These resources can be used for free and adapted for your own purposes. They can be downloaded at: [add e.g. national website, professional organisation website, your national page for <http://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu>].

We would like to thank you in advance for your support and cooperation.

[Name(s)]

Minister of Health [Country]  
ECDC Director (optional)  
Professional organisation (optional)



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Dear [hospital prescriber],

As part of the Europe-wide efforts to keep antibiotics working, we are contacting you to call for your support in fighting the alarming rise of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance threatens patient health and safety in all healthcare settings in Europe, and the emergence of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics (multidrug-resistant bacteria) is particularly concerning.

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As a hospital prescriber, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- Follow **antibiotic treatment protocols**, based on evidence-based guidelines, and apply infection prevention and control measures that are established in your setting;
- **Consult the antibiotic stewardship team** when needed, for examples when you prescribe an antibiotic outside of normal guidelines;
- **Only start** antibiotic treatment **if there is evidence** of a bacterial infection, and do not treat colonisation;
- **Avoid unnecessary** antibiotic **prophylaxis**;
- Question staff members who **breach guidelines or protocols** and provide them with tools to understand what they are doing wrong;
- Document the indication of antibiotic treatment, drug choice, dosage, route of administration and duration of the treatment in the **patient chart**;
- Be a good **source of information** for your patients and help them understand the importance of prudent antibiotic use. Ensure that patients (and their families) understand the reasons for antibiotic therapy, and key points related to antibiotic use, including to:
  - a. take antibiotics exactly as prescribed;
  - b. never save antibiotics for later use;
  - c. never use leftover antibiotics from previous treatments; and
  - d. never share leftover antibiotics with other people.

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Hospital manager (optional)  
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Dear [nurse],

As part of the Europe-wide efforts to keep antibiotics working, we are contacting you to call for your support in fighting the alarming rise of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance threatens patient health and safety in all healthcare settings in Europe, and the emergence of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics (multidrug-resistant bacteria) is particularly concerning.

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As a nurse, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- **Improve antibiotic administration practices** in collaboration with doctors and pharmacists;
- **Follow the infection prevention and control measures** that are established in your setting;
- Ensure that **patients** (and their families) **understand the reason** for antibiotic therapy, and key points related to antibiotic use, including to:
  - a. take antibiotics exactly as prescribed;
  - b. never save antibiotics for later use;
  - c. never use leftover antibiotics from previous treatments; and
  - d. never share leftover antibiotics with other people.
- Ensure that **cultures are appropriately taken** and sent to the microbiology laboratory, before starting antibiotics;
- Ensure that **laboratory results are promptly communicated** to the treating physician;
- **Prompt prescribers to document** their reviewing decision for all patients on antibiotics after 48 to 72 hours;
- Inform the prescriber or pharmacist if you see a patient has an antibiotic **prescription** which has continued **beyond seven days** without specified duration;
- If you see staff members at the hospital or healthcare setting who **breach guidelines or protocols**, ask them why they are doing so and provide them with tools to understand what they are doing wrong;
- **Participate regularly in training courses** and meetings on prudent antibiotic use, specimen collection, and infection prevention and control;

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If you want to know more about the antibiotic stewardship programme in your hospital, contact [email address] or call [phone number].  
See more information at [hospital website]

The statements in this letter are supported by scientific evidence. Visit <http://antibiotic.ecdc.europa.eu> or scan the QR code.



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Dear [hospital pharmacist],

As part of the Europe-wide efforts to keep antibiotics working, we are contacting you to call for your support in fighting the alarming rise of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance threatens patient health and safety in all healthcare settings in Europe, and the emergence of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics (multidrug-resistant bacteria) is particularly concerning.

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As a hospital pharmacist, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- Support the development and implementation of an **antibiotic stewardship programme** within your organisation;
- Provide feedback and advice to prescribers on **antibiotic choice, dosage, duration** optimisation and route of administration;
- Encourage clinicians to perform appropriately **timed parenteral-to-oral switches**;
- Check that antibiotic prescriptions follow antibiotic treatment protocols, based on evidence-based guidelines. If you see staff members at the hospital or healthcare setting who **breach guidelines or protocols**, ask them why they are doing so and provide them with tools to understand what they are doing wrong;
- Collect and **share data** on antibiotic use and costs at ward level and hospital level;
- Together with prescribers, provide patients who have to continue antibiotic therapy after discharge with **information on use** of antibiotics at home;
- **Train hospital prescribers** regularly on prudent antibiotic use and participate in meetings on implementing evidence-based hospital antibiotic guidelines;

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Dear [infectious disease specialist],

As part of the Europe-wide efforts to keep antibiotics working, we are contacting you to call for your support in fighting the alarming rise of antibiotic resistance. Antibiotic resistance threatens patient health and safety in all healthcare settings in Europe, and the emergence of bacteria resistant to multiple antibiotics (multidrug-resistant bacteria) is particularly concerning.

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As a infectious disease specialist, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- Support the development and implementation of an **antibiotic stewardship programme** within your organisation;
- Promote **local guidelines** on managing infections and using antibiotics. These should be readily and reliably accessible to all healthcare providers;
- Check that antibiotic prescriptions follow **antibiotic treatment protocols**, based on evidence-based guidelines. If you see staff members at the hospital or healthcare setting who breach guidelines or protocols, ask them why they are doing so and provide them with tools to understand what they are doing wrong;
- Provide feedback and advice to prescribers on **diagnostic evaluation and treatment** of infectious diseases;
- Regularly **train hospital prescribers** on prudent antibiotic use and participate in meetings on implementing evidence-based hospital antibiotic guidelines.

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Dear [clinical microbiologist],

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As a clinical microbiologist, you have a responsibility to support prudent use of antibiotics in your hospital and to ensure that these drugs remain effective. There are actions that you can take to tackle antibiotic resistance:

- Provide **guidelines for specimen collection**, storage and transport;
- Ensure that laboratory testing and antimicrobial susceptibility reporting **follow treatment guidelines** (including selective reporting), and include relevant comments on interpretation if needed;
- Ensure that identification and antimicrobial susceptibility testing **results are communicated** to prescribers, nurses and the antibiotic stewardship team, especially for critical results (e.g. blood cultures);
- Ensure that testing and reporting of microbiology results follow **European and national standards** (i.e. European Committee on Antimicrobial Susceptibility Testing - EUCAST);
- **Provide data** on antibiotic resistance at hospital level and ward level, **and communicate trends** to the antibiotic stewardship team and the infection prevention and control team;
- **Train hospital prescribers** regularly on antibiotic resistance, and on use of rapid and point-of-care diagnostic tests.

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