

EAP News

Corporate Services Employee Assistance
Program * 1-800-962-7487

WAR OF THE WORLDS

Enemy infiltration, attack, take over, mass destruction, war zones. There's no denying that these are a part of our world today. However, these terms are also descriptive of a war that can break out within our own bodies. Below the surface, damaging microbes are outnumbering defensive forces. As they dominate and take over, sickness and death result. Long ago we were warned about the problems associated with overuse of antibiotics. Today we pay the price. The antibiotics we have in our arsenal are becoming ineffective against more and more virulent strains of bacteria and other microbes. You may have heard them referred to as "superbugs." In order to survive, these microbes have found a way around the onslaught of antibiotics we employ to kill them. They have adapted and evolved to become stronger and deadlier, all because of the overuse and indiscriminate use of antibiotics in our society.

Both the [World Health Organization](#) and the US [Centers for Disease Control](#) have identified antibiotic resistance as a high priority for research. According to the CDC website "Each year in the United States, at least 2 million people become infected with bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics and at least 23,000 people die each year as a direct result of these infections. Many more people die from other conditions that were complicated by an antibiotic-resistant infection."

Antibiotics continue to be overused worldwide. It should be noted that therapeutic use in humans accounts for less than half of all applications of antibiotics produced commercially. A major contributor is factory farming. Antibiotics are used in livestock in order to promote growth, prevent infection, reap larger yields and increased earnings. However, in a currently-running commercial, a major chicken manufacturer announces that they are adding oregano to the chicken's water to prevent infection instead of antibiotics. I can't help but wonder how a simple practice like this could have had impacted our current problems if begun years ago.

While the fight continues globally to retain our dominance over antibiotic resistant bugs, there are things you can do locally, for yourself and your family. Simple practices done today, like oregano in a chicken's water, can have a big impact on what life looks like tomorrow.

Tip #1: If you are prescribed a course of antibiotics, take them all. Don't quit once you are feeling better and believe you have been cured. This contributes to antibiotic resistance. The weaker microbes are killed by the antibiotic, but heartier ones can live to infect again. They can even pass their resistance on to other harmful microbes.

Tip #2: Question your doctor (it's okay, really!) about treating infections that *are not* bacterial with antibiotics. Antibiotics are only for use against bacterial infections. Your infection could be viral, fungal or parasitic. If so, and your doctor is prescribing an antibiotic, find out why. Ask if there are any alternatives to specifically treat the type of infection you have.

Tip #3: Take care of your immune system and it will take care of you. You will have less need for antibiotics and trips to the hospital, where germs thrive and are easily passed on from

person to person. A strong immune system is the best defense against opportunistic microbes. Your fighter cells will remove them before they become a problem. In order to boost your immunity, eat nutritious non-chemically treated foods most of the time, don't overeat, get fresh air, drink enough water, exercise moderately, learn how to handle stress, and get enough sleep to rejuvenate your body.

Tip #4: Take probiotics. Kimchi, kombucha, kefir, fermented vegetables. If these names are not familiar to you, become familiar with them. They are teaming with probiotics and prebiotics that populate your digestive system with healthy bacteria, also known as "good bacteria." The good bacteria crowd out the harmful kind and prevent them from thriving and taking hold.

Tip #5: Buy organic or free range animal products whenever possible. These are the kinds that are not treated with antibiotics and hormones that get into your system.

Tip #6: Support restrictions on the use of antibiotics as growth promoters in farm animals. This accounts for the majority of antibiotics used worldwide. Australia is ahead of the game with stringent regulations on the use of antibiotics in animal production. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said of other countries.

Tip #7: Be careful to avoid infection or to spread infection to others. Wash your hands for 20 seconds with soap and warm water after touching any surface or person that may be contaminated or infected; use rubber gloves when you know you will be exposed. Keep your hands away from your eyes and mouth; periodically clean all "high-touch" surfaces, like TV remotes, light switches, door knobs, faucets, etc. with disinfectant (diluted bleach is good); cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze (do not cough or sneeze into your hands). Use other common-sense methods to keep everyone safe.

Tip #8: Follow any specific disposal instructions on the prescription drug labeling or patient information that accompanies your medicine. Do not flush medicines down the sink or toilet unless this information specifically instructs you to do so. This could result in a public health threat. Visit the following website for disposal instruction and information. <http://www.fda.gov/ForConsumers/ConsumerUpdates/ucm101653.htm> The same disposal methods for prescription drugs could apply to over-the-counter as well.

Tip #9: Consider alternative, natural cures and preventatives. A number of herbs, for example, have anti-microbial properties. The versatile Garlic has anti-bacterial, anti-fungal, anti-parasitic and anti-viral properties. But before trying anything, do your research. Look for side effects and contraindications. Garlic, for example, has blood thinning properties and would not be appropriate for anyone on blood thinning meds or with certain blood conditions.

Tip #10: Contact your EAP if you or a loved one is dealing with a health crisis. Our professional clinicians are here to help.

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Pat Hollenbeck
EAP Contract Manager
Certified Health Coach