

NORTHERN IRELAND MEDICINES MANAGEMENT

Antimicrobial Update

November 2023



European Antibiotic Awareness Day

World Antimicrobial Resistance Awareness Week

European Antibiotic Awareness Day (EAAD), led by the European Centre for Disease Control (ECDC) is a public health initiative aimed at encouraging responsible use of antibiotics held on 18th November every year.

[World AMR Awareness Week](#) (WAAW) takes place from 18th to 24th November each year. WAAW is led globally by the World Health Organisation (WHO). It aims to increase awareness of global antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and to encourage best practices among the general public, health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections.

WHO's WAAW 2023 campaign theme will remain as '**Preventing antimicrobial resistance together**'.

This theme highlights that fighting AMR is a truly global endeavour and must be addressed through a One Health approach. Antimicrobial resistant microbes can spread between and within human, animal, and plant populations and migrate through the environment. This means a One Health approach is needed to tackle AMR where people across these sectors work together to combat this problem.

The slogan of WAAW remains '**Antimicrobials: Handle with Care**'.



PENICILLIN ALLERGY DELABELLING

Does it matter that patients have penicillin allergy labels?

Patients with penicillin allergy labels have more AMR, healthcare associated infections (HCAIs), stay longer in hospital and cost more to treat ([West, JAC 2019](#)).

Penicillin allergy labels are linked to:

- 6 extra deaths per 1000 adult patients in the year after receiving an antibiotic
- Equates to 5400 extra patient deaths per year (possibly 5000 avoidable)

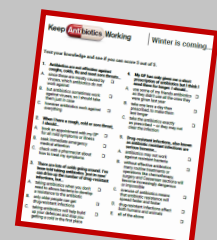
A number of Trusts are undertaking work to remove penicillin allergy label where appropriate. Practices may receive requests from Trusts to remove a patients allergy status from their electronic care record.

The Royal Pharmaceutical society has developed a [checklist for pharmacists to inform conversations with patients about penicillin allergy](#).



WAAW Competition

Complete the [Keep Antibiotics Working quiz](#) for a chance to win £50 Love to Shop vouchers. Competition closes 30th November 2023.



Northern Ireland (NI) Public Health Survey

Public Health Agency (PHA) and SPPG in collaboration with the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) Primary Care and Interventions Unit carried out a survey of the general public's health seeking attitudes and behaviours towards antibiotics. The data was collected in September/October 2023 of this year. The respondents were asked about their behaviour and actions taken in response to any recent infections in the previous 12 month period from August 2022.

When we look at the NI public awareness of antibiotics we see some interesting results: there is a reasonably good understanding of their role in treating bacterial infections but 1 in 5 of the population incorrectly assume that they can be used to treat viral infections.



Keep Antibiotics Working Community Pharmacy Living Well Campaign

Living Well is a community-based pharmacy service offered in over 500 pharmacies across NI. As part of the Living Well service throughout October and November, community pharmacies are highlighting the importance of keeping antibiotics working.

Campaign Messages

- Taking antibiotics when you don't need them puts you and your family at risk
- Taking antibiotics encourages harmful bacteria that live inside you to become **resistant**. This means antibiotics may not work when you really need them
- Always take your doctor or pharmacist's advice on antibiotics
- Do not share your antibiotics with family, friends or pets
- Do not keep your antibiotics for future illnesses
- Always return unused antibiotics to your pharmacy for safe disposal, do not flush down the toilet
- Do not expect/demand antibiotics from your doctor



Further information is available on [PHA website](#).

NEW UK National Action Plan



NI – Department of Health Changing the Culture 2019-2024

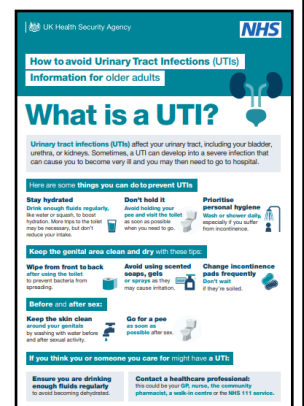
One Health strategy for tackling antimicrobial resistance in NI aimed for a 15% reduction in antibiotic prescribing in primary care by 2023/24, prior to COVID-19 pandemic and Strep A epidemic. A new 4 nation 5 year national action plan to tackle AMR between 2024-2029 is currently in development.

Antibiotic alerts and updates

- [Fluoroquinolones](#) reminder of the risk of disabling and potentially long lasting or irreversible side effects
- [Fluoroquinolones](#) reminder of the risk of psychiatric reactions, including depression and psychotic reactions, which may potentially lead to thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- [Nitrofurantoin](#) reminder of the risks of pulmonary and hepatic adverse drug reaction
- NICE Sore Throat (Acute) [NICE NG84](#) guideline reinstated - People who are most likely to benefit from an antibiotic ([FeverPAIN score](#) of 4 or 5, or [Centor score](#) of 3 or 4)

Resources

- [NI Microguide](#) download the app
- [GPNI webinar](#) on discussing antibiotics with patients and [TARGET resources](#) which are available in multiple languages and formats, HTML format can be sent to patients mobile phones via text message or email
- **New UTI prevention and awareness toolkit** [Urinary tract infection resource suite: Campaign resources \(rcgp.org.uk\)](#)
 - How to avoid UTIs
 - UTIs know the symptoms
- Self-care forum fact sheets [Fact Sheets - Self Care Forum](#)



This newsletter has been produced for GPs and pharmacists by the Regional Pharmacy and Medicines Management Team. If you have any queries or require further information on the contents, please contact one of the [Pharmacy Advisors](#)

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