Antibiotics have been one of the most important life-saving medical developments of the last century.

However, they are not effective against all types of bacteria (so-called intrinsic resistance). In addition, some bacteria can develop tolerance to certain antibiotics or develop ways to break them down (so-called extrinsic resistance). In either case, if these resistant bacteria go on to cause an infection it can be much more difficult to treat.

If the use of antibiotics remains unchecked, common infections will become more dangerous, and surgical procedures where antibiotics are used such as routine hip replacements and caesarean sections will become more difficult to perform safely.

Antimicrobial-resistant infections already cause illness and death in patients, and also disrupt care in hospitals.

Reducing antimicrobial use and resistance is among the key priorities for HSCNI. Local initiatives to tackle this threat are delivered through the NI Department of Health's AMR implementation plan which is aligned to the UK 5-year action plan for antimicrobial resistance 2024 to 2029.

For more information about Antimicrobial Awareness.

Follow the link for our most recent Annual Report and an archive of previous reports.

Healthcare associated infections reports

Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus) is a round shaped bacterium which commonly colonises the nose, respiratory tract, gut mucosa and the skin usually without causing any problems. It can also cause disease, particularly if there is an opportunity for the bacteria to enter the body, for example through broken skin or a medical procedure (including operations and intravenous lines). If these bacteria enter the body, illnesses which range from mild to life threatening may develop.

C. difficile is a bacterium that can infect the bowel and cause diarrhoea. The infection most commonly affects people who have recently been treated with antibiotics and can spread by spores found within faeces. Infections can occur where many people take antibiotics and are in close contact with each other, such as hospitals and care homes.

Find out more about Clostridium difficile on NIdirect website.

Follow the link for more information about Staphylococcus aureus.

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