

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 go on to cause an infection it can be much more difficult to treat resistant bacteria. If the use of antibiotics remains unchecked, common infections will become more dangerous, and surgical procedures where antibiotics are used 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 as outlined in the NI Department of Health's 2019 [five-year action plan for tackling antimicrobial resistance](#).

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