**Antibiotics to treat common childhood infections could soon be 'useless', experts warn - as resistance to drugs grows**

* **Antibiotics to treat common childhood infections could soon be 'useless'**
* **Warnings of growing antibiotic resistance among children across globe**
* **Situation is dire in developing nations, where drugs freely available over counter - experts from University of Bristol and Imperial College London**
* **Common drugs now ineffective in almost half of all British children**

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Antibiotics used to treat common infections in children could soon be rendered useless, as levels of resistance to the drugs grows, experts today warned.

Such is the scale of the crisis, several drugs could become ineffective as first-line treatments in many countries.

While the crisis affects all nations, antibiotic resistance is more prevalent as a threat in developing countries, it has been suggested, because the drugs tend to be freely available over the counter.

Common antibiotics are now ineffective in almost half of British children, the new study has revealed.

Some 48 per cent of UK youngsters with a common bladder complaint were carrying germs resistant to Ampicillin – a drug used to treat several illnesses.

Meanwhile 25 per cent of British children had become resistant to Trimethoprim, another common antibiotic, and 8 per cent could not be treated with Co-Amoxiclav.

It means the most frequently used antibiotics could soon be rendered unusable, researchers from the University of Bristol and Imperial College London suggested.

The research, published last night in the British Medical Journal, adds to a growing body of evidence that antibiotic resistance is creating a breed of untreatable superbugs.

Dame Sally Davies, the Government’s Chief Medical Officer, has repeatedly warned that superbugs risk creating a ‘public health catastrophe’ on the scale of terrorism or global warming.

Her message has gained traction at the very highest levels – David Cameron has warned that superbugs’ resistance could send medicine ‘back to the dark ages’.

Part of the problem is the high usage of antibiotics, which increases the chances of bacteria becoming resistant.

The new study confirmed doctors’ concerns, with the researchers finding that E.coli bacteria remained resistant to antibiotics for six months after treatment.

The scientists focused on children with urinary tract infections, analysing data from 78,000 children around the world.

They reviewed 58 studies, and assessed how many children had E.coli bacteria that was resistant to commonly used antibiotics.

The researchers found that developing countries had higher rates of resistant bugs - thought to be because antibiotics in many poor countries are freely available over the counter.

But even in Britain, where antibiotics are tightly controlled, almost half of children tested were carrying bacteria resistant to some antibiotics.

In wealthy OECD countries, more than half of all samples were resistant to Ampicillin and almost a quarter were resistant to Trimethoprim.

Three in 10 samples were resistant to Co-Trimoxazole and 8.2 per cent were resistant to Co-Amoxiclav.

The researchers said resistance was substantially greater in non-OECD countries, where almost four in five samples were resistant to Ampicillin, almost 70 per cent were resistant to Co-Trimoxazole and three in five did not respond to the antibiotic Co-Amoxiclav.

The team wrote: ‘Our findings detail global high-level resistance to some of the most commonly-prescribed antibiotics for children in primary care, which could result in several drugs becoming ineffective first-line treatments in many countries.’

Urinary tract infections are very common in children, with one in 10 girls and one in 30 boys suffering with the problem by the time they turn 16.

E.coli is responsible for more than 80 per cent of all urinary tract infections in children.

Ashley Bryce, of the Centre for Academic Primary Care in Bristol, said: ‘Prevalence of resistance to commonly-prescribed antibiotics in primary care in children with urinary tract infections caused by E.coli is high, particularly in countries outside the OECD, where one possible explanation is the availability of antibiotics over the counter.’

Study co-lead researcher Dr Ceire Costelloe, of Imperial College London, added: ‘The results also suggest previous antibiotic use increased the subsequent risk of E.coli resistance to that particular antibiotic - for up to six months after treatment.’

Read more: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-3494051/Antibiotics-treat-common-childhood-infections-soon-useless-experts-warn-resistance-drugs-grows.html#ixzz49fVKJnpI>   
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