# Common childhood illnesses resist antibiotics

**The findings add to fears about the threat from bugs that are resistant to antibiotics**

David Cheskin/PA

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[**Chris Smyth**](http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/public/profile/Chris-Smyth) Health Editor

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As many as half of common childhood infections are resistant to standard antibiotics, according to researchers who say that children are at risk from contracting superbugs.

GPs might need to change what they prescribed to children with urinary tract infections, said researchers who found that antibiotics were starting to fail. Children who had been treated with antibiotics were 13 times more likely to suffer from superbugs.

The findings, published in the *BMJ*, add to fears about the threat from bugs that are resistant to antibiotics, which could make common infections potentially fatal and make routine surgery too risky.

British researchers analysed 58 studies of almost 80,000 case of *E. coli*, the most common cause of urinary tract infections in children. In developed countries such as Britain, 53 per cent of samples were resistance to ampicillin and 24 per cent were resistant to another standard drug, trimethoprim. In countries where antibiotics were routinely available over the counter, 79 per cent of infections were resistant to ampicillin.

Ceire Costelloe, of Imperial College London, co-leader of the research, said: “The results also suggest previous antibiotic use increased the subsequent risk of *E. coli* resistance to that particular antibiotic.” She said that antibiotics wiped out non-resistant strains of *E. coli*, leaving the field clear for those that were able to withstand the drugs to multiply and cause fresh infections.

Professor Grant Russell, of Monash University in Melbourne, writes in the journal: “Primary care clinicians will probably need to get used to taking an ‘antibiotic history’ before prescribing for common bacterial infections.”