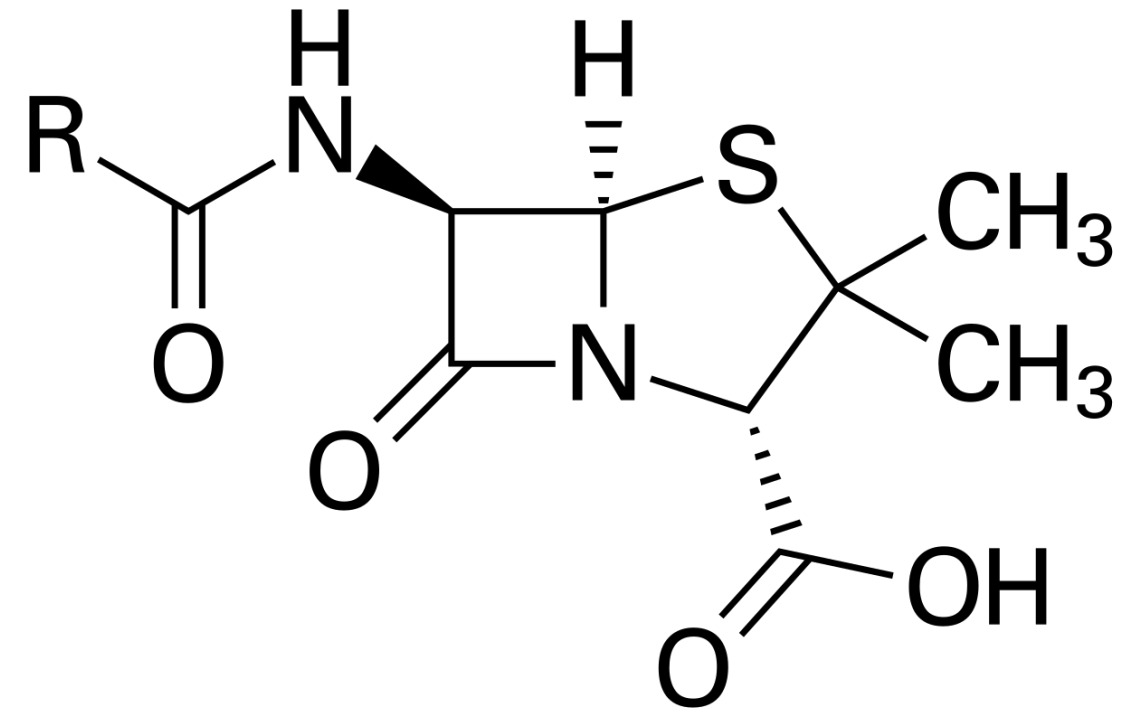


Antibiotics and Penicillin

Use of fungi to treat infection was widespread in ancient cultures, but isolation of the active moulds was not done until the 19th Century.

In 1928 Alexander Fleming isolated the antibiotic penicillin, but it was not until the outbreak of war in 1939 that much notice was taken. Large-scale production began in 1941, and today 30,000kg are produced each year.

Widespread use of antibiotics has added, on average, 20 years to global life expectancy since 1945. Yet, bacteria are evolving resistance to these medicines, and new therapies are always needed.



Above: Generic penicillin structure. Variation of the R group produces different penicillins with different antimicrobial properties.

Below: Penicillium mould growing on bread. Moulds have been used as a source of medicine by humans for thousands of years..

