



Stamping Out Superbugs



TextCoach Member Benefit



Teen Talk

THE HEALTH KICK

2023

Stamping Out Superbugs A Clear and Present Danger

Bacteria are found nearly everywhere. They're in your food, recreational waters, and even the air. Some bacteria help keep you healthy. But some can make you very sick.

If you're healthy, your body may fight off harmful bacteria on its own. But sometimes you need antibiotics. These are drugs that kill bacteria or stop them from growing. They can be critical for preventing or fighting a life-threatening disease. But over time, bacteria can become resistant to drugs that are misused or overused. That means that the drug will no longer stop them.

In the U.S., drug-resistant bacteria infect nearly 3 million people and kill more than 35,000 every year. These "superbugs" have evolved to protect themselves against drugs. This can happen through changes in their genes. Sometimes antibiotics don't stop all the bacteria in an infection. Any bacteria that survive will continue to multiply. They may gain further drug resistance. This makes it even more difficult to control them with antibiotics.

Drug-resistant infections pose many dangers. Bacteria that are resistant to one drug may still be treatable with





and you are not going to know what you're treating for several days, you have to make a decision," Fowler explains. Not starting treatment immediately can lead to life-threatening infections. But giving antibiotics to a patient who doesn't need them can also cause problems. They can cause side effects and lead to superbugs.

There are ways people can help guard against superbugs. Use antibiotics only when they're needed. If a doctor doesn't prescribe antibiotics, don't pressure them to change their mind. And when you do get antibiotics, take them exactly as prescribed.

The best way to protect yourself and your family against harmful bacteria is to avoid infection in the first place. See the Wise Choices box for tips.

stronger drugs. But these backup drugs can have more serious side effects. Bacteria that become resistant to too many drugs may be untreatable. Some medical procedures that carry a high risk of infection, like organ transplants, may become more dangerous without effective antibiotics.

Researchers are studying new ways to fight superbugs. Some are working on novel antibiotics. Another strategy uses phages, which are viruses that attack bacteria.

A team led by Dr. Vance Fowler, an infectious disease expert at Duke University, is leading a study of a phage mixture that attacks *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* bacteria. These bacteria tend to spread in hospitals and other health care settings. They're often resistant to many antibiotics. Fowler's team is testing whether phages can be used to treat people with the infection.

They're also working on a rapid test that can tell the difference between infections caused by bacteria and those caused by viruses. Doctors could use the test to decide how to treat the infection. That could help avoid unnecessary antibiotic prescriptions.

Antibiotics don't work against viruses. Viruses cause common colds and the flu, but some bacteria can cause similar symptoms. Sometimes, doctors must prescribe antibiotics before they have the test results that confirm a bacterial infection.

"When you have a critically ill patient in front of you,

Article reprinted from NIH-News In Health



Wise Choices

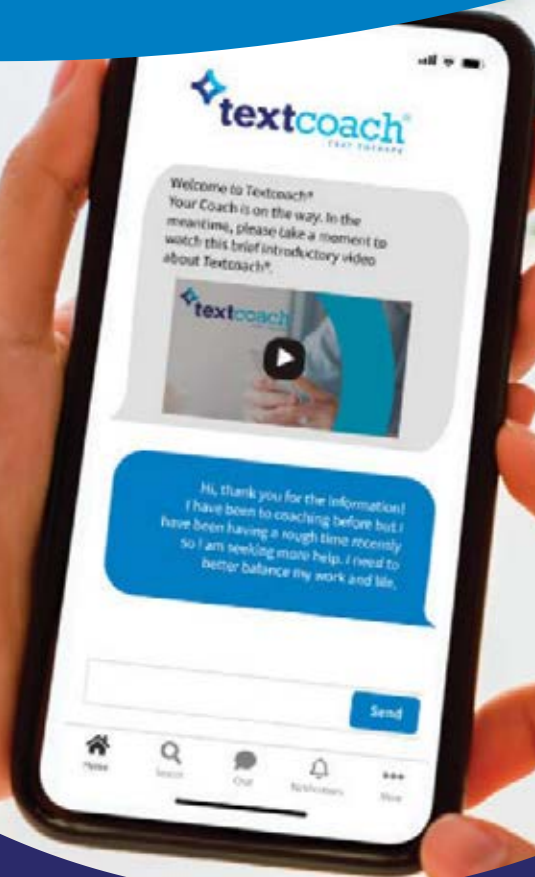
Guard Against Bacteria

- **Maintain a healthy lifestyle**, including proper diet and exercise. This can help prevent illnesses.
- **Get all recommended vaccinations.** To learn more, visit the CDC's Vaccine Schedules([link is external](#)).
- **Wash your hands with soap and water regularly.**
- **Cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.** Stay home when you're sick.
- **If you're prescribed an antibiotic, take it exactly as instructed** by your doctor. Don't share your antibiotics with others or save them for future use.
- **Don't pressure your doctor to prescribe an antibiotic or take antibiotics prescribed for someone else.** Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can create drug-resistant bacteria.

Adapted from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

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Teen Talk

What's weighing on teens' minds and mental health

(BPT) - It's not uncommon for teens to experience heightened levels of stress, anxiety and depression during the school year as they contend with known stressors like bullying, peer pressure, and academic and extracurricular demands. However, recent research, "Family Matters: Report on the State of Family Mental Health in the U.S.," conducted by MDLIVE, a leading virtual care provider, finds there are many more issues beyond the classroom walls that are affecting teens' mental health.

What's stressing teens today

According to the report, teens are just as likely as adults, if not more than, to be concerned today about the job market, family financial stability, and the impact of inflation on food and housing costs. What's more, the report shows a disconnect between the issues teens say

are affecting them, and what parents think they know about what's impacting their teens' mental health. More than half of teens say LGBTQ+ rights affect their mental health, while only 42% of parents think it affects their kids. Similar gaps exist for the impact on mental health of social media and news of spikes in cases of COVID and other infectious diseases.

The good news is that teens wish that there was more family discussion around many of these issues, including LGBTQ+ rights, school safety and social justice in the U.S. While it is not always a comfortable or natural situation for parents, it is important that they find opportunities to talk with their kids about the issues that are troubling them.

"Parents may be uncomfortable talking about certain current topics because they may not fully understand them themselves, fear they might disagree with their teen's point of view or underestimate the impact of these issues on their kids," said Dr. Shakira Espada-Campos, associate chief of behavioral health at MDLIVE. "It's not always easy, but leaning into these tough topics shows teens that open and honest communication is important and can have a positive impact on their well-being."

Engagement and support

While discussing mental health with your children can seem overwhelming, Espada-Campos outlines five simple and attainable ways parents can address difficult subject matters and pinpoint

any other concerns they or their children may have:

1. Do your homework

Talking to teens about significant societal topics requires sensitivity, empathy and a willingness to learn. Before you initiate a conversation, familiarize yourself with the topic, but be comfortable not being an expert. Teens want openness, not necessarily expertise, and they want to know you will listen.

2. Keep your positions in check

Everyone has an opinion, but with your teens, it's critical to keep your own views in check as the conversation unfolds. They may know your opinion already just from observing you. You don't have to hide your views, but be sure not to downplay or dismiss their position or concerns.

3. Tune into social media

Consider social media as a window into your teen's world. While respecting their privacy, ask them about their favorite content creators or news channels they follow and start tuning into those channels yourself. This can give you a better understanding of the themes or ideas resonating with them, and, in turn, help you determine the topics worth discussing.

4. Consider the approach

Rather than scheduling a specific time to talk, which may place undue pressure on them, consider initiating the conversation during a shared activity, such as cooking

or hiking, to allow for a more natural and relaxed dialogue. Try asking specific questions like "What was the best or most difficult part of your day?" or "Which one of your friends do you feel you have the most in common with?" which prompt answers that reveal their current mindset. And be consistent with these conversations, which will let your teen know they have consistent support from you.

5. Recognize the signs

Unlike a physical ailment, mental health struggles might not always present obvious signs. It's often the subtle shifts that may signal an issue, including changes in behavior, body language, academic performance, sleep or eating habits. If your child seems to be withdrawing from previously enjoyed activities or from friends and family, it can also be a sign they're struggling, and time to talk to them about professional support.

Know your support options

Remember, the ultimate goal is to ensure your child feels heard, understood and supported. There are many options available for getting your child support from a mental health professional. Virtual therapy services are a convenient and flexible option for teens - the comfort of being in their own environment can facilitate open dialogue, while also accommodating the often- hectic schedules of teens and parents. Always contact your health benefits plan to check what behavioral services may be covered.

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