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CDC: Antibiotic-Resistant Germs Remain a Menace

In 2013, three germs made the list of urgent threats to human health. Two more were added this year, according to a new report.

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In the United States, antibiotic-resistant bacteria and fungi result in more than 2.8 million infections and 35,000 deaths each year. On average, this means that every 11 seconds someone develops an antibiotic-resistant infection, and every 15 minutes someone dies as a result of such an infection, according to a new report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Titled Antibiotic Resistance Threats in the United States, 2019, the report added two new germs categorized as urgent threats to three others already on the list: Candida auris (a fungus) and Acinetobacter (carbapenem-resistant bacteria are resistant to the class of antibiotic called carbapenem).

The other three superbugs are carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE), Neisseria gonorrhoeae (a sexually transmitted infection) and Clostridioides difficile (C. diff), the deadliest antibiotic-resistant germ on the CDC's urgent list. (In total, there are now 18 germs on the antibiotic resistance threats list.)

Overall, superbug infections have decreased in hospitals, but 85% of deaths from antibiotic-resistant germs are caused by those commonly found in health care settings. The germs build resistance that becomes embedded in their DNA, which passes from generation to generation and moves between germs.

According to the CDC, developing new antibiotics is not the answer to an increase in antibiotic resistance. Instead, the agency suggests that antibiotics should be decreased because overuse of these drugs can exacerbate antibiotic resistance among superbugs. (About 47 million antibiotics prescribed annually in doctors' offices and emergency departments are unnecessary, the CDC notes.)

"We need to adopt aggressive strategies that keep the germs away and infections from occurring in the first place," wrote Robert R. Redfield, MD, director of the CDC, in the report. "Preventing infections protects everyone. Improving antibiotic use in people and animals slows the threat and helps preserve today's drugs and those yet to come. Detecting threats and implementing

interventions to keep germs from becoming widespread saves lives."

For similar coverage, read "Common Nonantibiotic Drugs May Contribute to Antibiotic Resistance" and "Could Bacteriophages Be an Alternative to Antibiotics?"

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