



Latinos Living Healthy



LULAC's SUPER MADRES

With support from the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Latinos Living Healthy initiative is proud to introduce the LULAC Super Madres, a group of dedicated community leaders advocating for judicious use of antibiotics to improve health outcomes for Latino families. Through LULAC's network of 135,000 community volunteers, 900 councils and 60 community technology centers, this program advocates for policies and legislation that will protect the public's health by restricting the overuse of antibiotics in food animal production. These practices increase bacterial resistance to medication meant to cure disease. Farm workers are particularly exposed to antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the work place. This puts them and their family at heightened risk of hard-to-treat infections.

The Effects of Antibiotic Resistance

Infections are becoming harder to treat because the bacteria that cause them have become more resistant to antibiotics than ever before.

- Flu like symptoms such as aches, upset stomach, can emerge among farm workers exposed to antibiotic resistant pathogens in addition to bronchial issues, hives, urinary tract infections, and worsening of asthma.
- 2 million Americans per year develop hospital-acquired infections, resulting in 99,000 deaths – the vast majority of which are related to antibiotic resistance.
- Patients infected by antibiotic-resistant Salmonella were much more likely to suffer severe complications such as bloodstream infections and to require hospitalization than were patients whose Salmonella infections were not resistant.
- Urinary tract infections are the second most common infection in the U.S. When untreated or not treated properly, they can develop into serious bloodstream infections.
- MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) kills more Americans each year than HIV/AIDS.

Why are Antibiotics so Important?

Since the 1940s antibiotics have been used to fight infections and diseases caused by bacteria. In the 1950s the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the addition of penicillin and tetracycline to chicken feed as growth promoters. Today, drug makers sell nearly 30 million pounds of antibiotics every year for use in livestock. These drugs are widely used to make animals grow faster and to compensate for overcrowded and unsanitary conditions. Most antibiotics used on industrial farms are the same ones used to treat people suffering E. coli, Salmonella, MRSA and other infections.

Antibiotic Resistance

When bacteria are exposed to antibiotics over long periods of time or at dosages lower than normal levels they become resistant to the drugs. These "superbugs" are excreted by animals into the environment where they spread through food, water, air and by direct contact to farm workers. Millions of pounds of medically important antibiotics are used as animal feed additives every year for growth promotion, not to treat sick animals.

The Politics of Antibiotic Use

LULAC, along with the Pew Charitable Trusts, is urging the FDA to strengthen regulations to increase public reporting of antibiotic use in meat and poultry production in order to protect the health of farm workers and to prevent the dangerous overuse of antibiotics.

Need to know legislation:

- **PAMTA** (HR 1150)– The Preservation of Antibiotics for Medical Treatment Act protects eight classes of antibiotics used to treat human illness by withdrawing their use from food animal production unless animals are sick or unless drug companies can prove that their use does not harm human health.
- **DATA** (HR 820) – Introduced the House of Representatives in February 2013, the Delivering Antimicrobial Transparency in Animals Act authorizes the FDA to collect and report data on how antibiotics are being used.
- **ADUFA** – The Animal Drug User Fee Act is passed every five years to ensure that the FDA has the funds it needs to review new drugs. This bill should include provisions that allow the agency to track how antibiotics are being used on industrial farms.

For more information visit Latinos Living Healthy online at:
www.lulac.org/health

Or follow LULAC on Facebook or Twitter
facebook.com/lulac.national.dc
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Antibiotics and Hispanics in the US

Occupation and poverty play key roles in the risk of being exposed to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Many Hispanics work in occupations that rank the lowest in socioeconomic status and, as a group, have a higher poverty rate than the national average. More Latinos work in agriculture and farming than any other group (as percentage of population) and, according to the Pew Hispanic Center, Mexican-Americans and foreign born Hispanics are more likely to be employed as farm workers than any other group. Spanish is reported to be the native language of over 80% of farm workers in the U.S. Close to 1/3 of Hispanics also lack health insurance. This all means that not only are Hispanics exposed to increasingly dangerous conditions, they also do not have access to health care services to help prevent or treat potentially life threatening illness.

Steps to Personal Prevention

For Patients:

- Take antibiotics exactly as the doctor prescribes
- Only take antibiotics prescribed for you – do not share leftovers
- Do not save antibiotics for the next illness
- Do not ask for antibiotics when your doctor thinks you do not need them
- Prevent infections by practicing good hand hygiene and getting recommended vaccines

For Doctors:

- Do not treat viral infections with antibiotics, even when patients ask for them
- Prescribe antibiotics only when they are absolutely necessary
- Avoid unnecessary overlaps in antibiotics
- Become familiar with resistance trends in your region
- Talk to your patients about appropriate use of antibiotics

How Access to Healthcare Can Prevent Epidemics

Regular screenings, preventative care, and comprehensive treatment plans are essential to the maintenance of public health. For Latinos and the entire population of uninsured Americans there are significant barriers to accessing these cornerstones of medicine. For Latinos, in addition to high poverty rates and unemployment there are additional cultural barriers related to linguistic competency of the health care work force as well as fear and mistrust of many government run assistance programs. People without access to quality affordable health care are more likely to develop infections resistant to antibiotics. They are also more likely to delay treatment because they have to choose between living expenses and the cost of care.

For Latino farm workers migrant health centers are a valuable resource for high-quality comprehensive primary and preventative health care where services are offered regardless of immigration status. For farmworkers exposed to “sub-therapeutic” levels of antibiotics over long periods of time there is a higher risk of becoming sick from an antibiotic resistant bacteria, spreading an illness to their families, and requiring long-term medical care. Early detection of contagious infections can prevent the spread of life threatening bacteria.

Food safety in the new economy

Budget cuts to the FDA and USDA could have disastrous effects on health when paired with antibiotic resistant bacteria. Some common bacteria, including Campylobacter, Salmonella, E.coli, and staphylococcus aureus are found in meat, poultry and milk producing animals and cause food borne illness when spread to humans. The FDA and the USDA work to make sure that all food products meet certain safety guidelines to prevent the spread of these bacteria. With cuts to funding, inspectors may not be able to keep up with the supply of food products on the market which could make dangerous bacteria more prevalent in the food supply. When these bacteria become resistant to antibiotics the risk worsens as we become unable to treat the illnesses that they cause.

Four simple steps to help keep your foods safe.

1. Clean – To prevent bacteria from spreading wash your hands, surfaces and utensils. Rinse vegetables and fruits, but never meat, poultry or eggs.
2. Separate – Use separate cutting boards or plates for meat poultry and eggs. Keep meat poultry and eggs separate from produce in your refrigerator and in the cart while shopping.
3. Cook – Bacteria that cause food illness multiply the quickest between 40° and 140° F. Use a food thermometer to make sure foods are cooked to a safe temperature.
4. Chill - Refrigerate foods within 2 hours. Never thaw or marinate foods on the counter; always thaw foods in the refrigerator, cold water, or microwave.

For more information visit Foodsafety.gov

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT

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