

# Misconceptions fuelling antibiotic misuse

**A**NTIBIOTICS have fundamentally reshaped the landscape of modern medicine, emerging as indispensable allies in the battle against infectious diseases that were once deemed perilous or even fatal.

These medications have revolutionised healthcare by transforming previously life-threatening infections into treatable conditions, leading to a remarkable decrease in mortality rates and an enhanced quality of life for countless individuals.

However, the reckless misuse and overprescription of antibiotics has become a pressing concern, posing a severe threat to their long-term effectiveness.

This trend is driving the rise of antimicrobial resistance (AMR), an issue that jeopardises not only individual health but also public health on a global scale, says Professor Dr Zamberi Sekawi, senior consultant clinical microbiologist at Universiti Putra Malaysia.

"If this crisis is allowed to escalate, we may find ourselves confronting a chilling post-antibiotic era, wherein even minor infections could evolve into serious health risks and routine medical procedures become fraught with peril."

In Malaysia, the



*Many sore throats are viral in nature and do not require antibiotics, says Professor Dr Zamberi Sekawi, senior consultant clinical microbiologist at Universiti Putra Malaysia. PICTURE CREDIT: UPM*

challenge is compounded by a widespread lack of awareness and persistent misconceptions surrounding antibiotics, he explains.

Despite ongoing educational campaigns and initiatives aimed at raising awareness, many people still hold on to beliefs that can lead to detrimental practices, such as self-medication or prematurely discontinuing prescribed treatments.

"This is particularly concerning in cases of sore throat, where unnecessary antibiotic use contributes significantly to resistance. Many sore throats are viral in nature and do not require antibiotics."

In such cases, managing symptoms with pain relievers, hydration and throat sprays containing anti-inflammatory agents can provide effective relief.

Dr Zamberi says it is imperative to confront these misconceptions head-on, providing clear, accurate information to promote responsible antibiotic use among the public and healthcare providers.

"The urgency of this mission cannot be overstated as each day that passes without meaningful intervention further jeopardises the medical advancements that have been achieved using these lifesaving medications."

It is crucial that we act decisively to foster a culture of understanding and responsibility surrounding antibiotic use, ensuring a healthier future for all.

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*Not every bacterial infection requires antibiotics. Mild bacterial infections often resolve on their own with proper rest and hydration. PICTURE CREDIT: FREEPIK*

**Heal**

By Meera Murugesan

