



ENVIRONMENTAL WORKING GROUP

TIPS TO HELP YOU AVOID *Superbugs in Meat*

ewg.org/meateatersguide/superbugs

Why Avoid MEAT RAISED WITH ANTIBIOTICS?

Responsible doctors don't give people antibiotics they don't need, but livestock producers feed healthy animals antibiotics to make them grow faster — no prescription needed.



A sick animal may need an antibiotic. But most of the animals raised for food in the U.S. — some **8.9 billion a year** — come from factory farms where healthy animals are given antibiotics in their food and water, mainly to get them to slaughter faster or prevent infection in crowded, stressful and sometimes unsanitary living conditions.

This has dangerous consequences. It:

Breeds superbugs

Misusing antibiotics on the farm breeds antibiotic-resistant bacteria — superbugs.

Spreads resistance

Once bacteria develop resistance to one antibiotic, they can often tolerate others as well and spread this trait to nearby bacteria.

Spreads superbugs

Animals and livestock workers can transmit resistant bacteria to water, soil and air. Superbugs also travel on meat to stores — and kitchens.

Undermines antibiotics

Superbugs cause infections that are harder to treat and more likely to cause complications — or death.

Know the WORST OFFENDERS

In 2011, 87 percent of store-bought meat tested by the government was contaminated with *Enterococci* bacteria that can indicate fecal contamination. To be safe, it's best to treat *all meat* as if it's contaminated, mainly by cooking thoroughly and using safe shopping and kitchen practices (see other side).

High percentages of store-bought meat tested positive for antibiotic-resistant bacteria.



TURKEY

Ground turkey

81%



PORK

Pork chops

69%



BEEF

Ground beef

55%



CHICKEN

Breasts, wings, or thighs

39%

For information on health and environmental impacts of meat see ewg.org/meateatersguide

The Good News **YOU CAN PROTECT YOURSELF**

MINIMIZE YOUR *exposures* to superbugs in meat

Opt

for organic and meat raised without unnecessary antibiotics when you can. They have fewer superbugs, in part because these livestock producers rely on preventive medicine, good sanitation and stress reduction – not antibiotics – to keep animals healthy. Most stores offer an option at good prices.

Buy

from farmers and producers who use antibiotics prudently: some sell locally and others online. Check out ewg.org/meateatersguide/locator to find them.

Ask

your butcher or local farmer how the meat was raised. Ask your store manager to carry meat raised without unnecessary antibiotics.

IN THE *store*

- ▶ **Be label-savvy.** Labels can be misleading. Visit ewg.org/meateatersguide/decoding-meat-dairy-product-labels/

Most Reliable

USDA Certified Organic,
Animal Welfare Approved,
Certified Humane,
Global Animal Partnership.

Less Reliable

American Humane Certified,
Raised without antibiotics,
No antibiotics, No antibiotics ever,
No antibiotics added,
No antibiotics administered.

Be Wary

No Antibiotic Residues, Antibiotic Free,
No Antibiotic Growth Promotants,
No Hormones or Steroids Added,
Natural or Kosher,
don't tell you anything
about antibiotic use.

- ▶ **Bag raw meat before** it goes in the grocery cart—keep away from children. Be especially careful with ground meats. They harbor more bacteria because they have more surfaces where bacteria can lurk.

IN THE *kitchen*

- ▶ Store meat on the lowest rack in the fridge, away from fresh produce. Thaw in fridge. Use separate cutting boards for meat and produce. Don't wash meat – splashes spread bacteria. Use a food thermometer. Learn more about safe practices in EWG's wallet guide ewg.org/antibioticswalletguide and at foodsafety.gov.

BE *vocal*

- ▶ **When you're eating out**
Ask if the meat was raised without unnecessary antibiotics.
- ▶ **At the doctor's office**
Don't press for unnecessary antibiotics. Your doctor is less likely to prescribe one if you don't insist. Parents are the number one reason for antibiotic overuse in children.
- ▶ **With your friends**
Share this tip sheet or a wallet guide with them.
- ▶ **Make your voice heard**
Go to ewg.org/AntibioticsAction to find out how you can help preserve the effectiveness of antibiotics.