

Avoiding Antibiotics in Meat

Why we care

Antibiotics are a life-saving component of human health care. But their overuse has serious consequences. Agriculture accounts for 80 percent of the antibiotics used in the United States, a majority of which are also used in human medical treatments. In concentrated animal feeding operations, antibiotics are added to feed and water as a way to promote growth and prevent disease common in overcrowded and unsanitary living conditions. Over time, bacteria can develop resistance to antibiotics, and this can be passed on to humans who handle and/or eat the meat. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, each year at least two million Americans fall ill and at least 23,000 die due to antibiotic-resistant bacteria.

Simple, positive steps

- **Eat more plants.** High-protein foods include grains, legumes, nuts, and tofu.
- **Buy meat produced without the use of antibiotics.** Look for third party certifications and label claims such as Organic, Humane Raised & Handled, Animal Welfare Approved, or “no antibiotics administered.”
- **Buy local.** Visit www.localharvest.org for a list of farmers, farmers markets, and CSAs, which do not use antibiotics routinely.
- **Buy grass-fed or pasture-raised meat.** For meat with fewer antibiotics and hormones and livestock raised in more humane conditions, see www.eatwild.com.
- **Ask when eating out.** A growing number of restaurant chains, including Chipotle and Panera Bread, have made a commitment to serve meat only from animals raised without antibiotics.
- **In the kitchen.** Use separate cutting boards for meat and produce. Do not eat undercooked meat.

Questions or feedback? Contact Jeanne Roy at jeanne@earthleaders.org.