

Majority Of Meat Contain Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

The majority of bacteria found on supermarket meat is antibiotic resistant, according to the Environmental Working Group. The EWG follows the Food and Drug Administration's yearly bacterial contamination and resistance tests, and the analysis of the most recently released year, 2015, shows that almost 80% of bacteria discovered on supermarket meats is resistant to antibiotics. The bacteria detected, including salmonella and Enterococcus faecalis, demonstrated resistance to crucial antibiotics like amoxicillin and tetracyclines. To listen to the FDA, antibiotic-resistant bacteria in the meat aisle at the grocery store is not an issue, but Dawn Undurraga, EWG's nutritionist and author of the report, sees things differently.

Consumers need to know about potential contamination of the meat they eat, so they can be vigilant about food safety, especially when cooking for children, pregnant women, older adults or the immune-compromised...By choosing organic meat and meat raised without antibiotics, consumers can help reduce the amount of antibiotics used in farm animals and slow the spread of drug resistance..."

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What to Look For

Different types of meat registered at different levels of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, and the winner of the title most resistant goes to ground turkey. Seventy-nine percent of ground turkey tested positive for antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This continues a trend, as 73% of salmonella

detected on turkey in 2014 was resistant to at least one antibiotic. Other types of meat tested also displayed antibiotic-resistant, though not on the same level, with pork chops at 71%, ground beef at 62%, and chicken breasts, leg, wings, and thighs at 36%.

Tetracyclines were another major point of concern. These are the most used class of antibiotics in food animals, and it shows in the percentage of bacteria that are resistant to that specific class. The bacteria responsible for an estimated 80 percent of human infections, *Enterococcus faecalis*, had significant resistance to tetracyclines across the different meats tested. *Enterococcus faecalis* on pork had the highest numbers, with 84 percent of bacteria present demonstrating tetracycline resistance. Chicken showed 71 percent resistance, and 26 percent of the bacteria found on beef registered resistance.

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The Resistance is Growing

The meat industry in the U.S. is deeply flawed. *E.coli* has developed resistance to all 14 of the antibiotics the FDA tested in 2014. *Salmonella* was not far behind, developing resistance to 13 of the tested antibiotics. Several countries have limited or banned meat imports from the U.S., either due to chemicals that are given to animals during their life (pork treated with ractopamine is rejected by China) or the final treatment of meat for sale (chlorine-washed chicken in the European Union). The recent report released from the FDA suggests that those things are unlikely to change in a timely fashion.

So how do you protect yourself? With how quickly antibiotic resistance is evolving, the only meat you can eat that's guaranteed to be free of resistant bacteria is no meat. If

that's not an option you're ok with, make sure you're buying responsibly raised meat, not treated with antibiotics and free range. Find your local farmer and talk to him about his animal treatment practices. Know where your food is coming from.

Sources:

- *Supermarket Meat Still Superbugged, Federal Data Show* – EWG
- *2015 NARMS Integrated Report* – FDA.gov
- *Superbugs Found in Most U.S. Supermarket Meat* – Organic Consumers
- *Chlorine Wash Doesn't Remove Salmonella on Chicken* – Organic Lifestyle Magazine