

ANTIBIOTICS IN FOOD

#3 IN A SERIES OF 3

SHOULD I be concerned about antibiotics in my food?

No. In Canada, food is tested for antibiotics to ensure that it is safe for you to eat.



Canada has **strict regulations** regarding how much time passes between when an animal is last treated with antibiotics and when it is sent to be prepared to be sold to consumers. This is known as a **WITHDRAWAL PERIOD**, and it ensures that antibiotics have left the animal's system before any product from the animal is sold as food.

For example, if a dairy cow receives medication, then the farmer cannot sell that cow's milk until the animal is healthy. Even after a farmer stops giving medicine to a cow, its milk must be discarded until the withdrawal period has passed.

Similarly, when laying hens are given antibiotics, their eggs are thrown away until the withdrawal period is finished.

Regular Testing

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) regularly tests food products to make sure they do not contain more antibiotics than the maximum limit allowed. Tests are in parts per billion, which would be like finding one drop in an entire swimming pool!



In 2013, **over 99.9%** of Canadian beef and imported beef products that were tested were found to be free from antibiotics.² If antibiotics are detected in a meat product, then that product cannot be sold.



There are 2.2 million milk pickups at farms in Canada every year. **Less than 0.009% test positive for antibiotics.** On the rare occasion that the milk does test positive for antibiotics, the whole truck load of milk is discarded and never reaches consumers.³

WHY WOULD THE PRESENCE OF ANTIBIOTICS IN FOOD BE A PROBLEM?

Over-exposure to antibiotics can lead to **antibiotic resistance**, which means that people and animals who are infected with a disease may not respond to antibiotic treatment.

A limited number of antibiotics are presently available. If these antibiotics become ineffective, then the ability to fight infectious diseases is significantly hindered.



Milking parlour

ANTIBIOTICS IN FOOD



Farmers and ranchers first priority is keeping their animals healthy!

Farmers and veterinarians work together to preventatively manage disease, which sometimes includes treatment with antibiotics.

Health Canada approves and controls antibiotics for both human and veterinary use in Canada. Before they are approved, antibiotics are thoroughly tested to make sure they are both safe and effective.



CODES OF PRACTICE

Codes of practice provide farmers and ranchers with information about how they are expected to raise their animals in order to maintain the high standards for animal care that we have in Canada.

Programs developed by various Canadian producer associations outline practices that farmers are expected to follow in order to ensure production of safe food. Examples include:

Farm groups are investing heavily in research to understand the animals they raise and investigate antibiotic alternatives. For example, Chicken Farmers of Canada and others in the poultry industry have invested over **\$1.4 million** in antibiotic alternatives research over the past few years.⁴



“Raised without antibiotics”

If you buy a chicken labelled “raised without the use of antibiotics,” then this means that no antibiotics were given to the chicken during its lifetime. Organic food is produced without using antibiotics.

REMEMBER: **ALL** Canadian chicken, meat, fish and dairy products are regularly tested for antibiotics and are safe to eat!

