



Good Germs, Bad Germs: Health and Survival in a Bacterial World

By Jessica Snyder Sachs

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Public sanitation and antibiotic drugs have brought about historic increases in the human life span; they have also unintentionally produced new health crises by disrupting the intimate, age-old balance between humans and the microorganisms that inhabit our bodies and our environment. As a result, antibiotic resistance now ranks among the gravest medical problems of modern times. *Good Germs, Bad Germs* tells the story of what went terribly wrong in our war on germs. It also offers a hopeful look into a future in which antibiotics will be designed and used more wisely, and beyond that to a day when we may replace antibacterial drugs and cleansers with bacterial ones.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Science writer Sachs (*Corpse*) makes a strong case for a new paradigm for dealing with the microbial life that teems around and within us. Taking both evolutionary and ecological approaches, she explains why antibiotics work so well but are now losing their effectiveness. She notes that between agricultural antibiotic usage and needless prescriptions written for human use, antibiotic resistance has reached terrifying levels. A decade ago, resistant infections acquired in hospitals were killing an estimated eighty-eight thousand Americans, each year... more than car accidents and homicides combined. Our attempts to destroy microorganisms regularly upset useful microbial communities, often leading to serious medical consequences. Sachs also presents evidence suggesting that an epidemiclike rise in autoimmune diseases and allergies may be attributable to our misguided frontal assault on the bacterial world. The solution proposed is to encourage the growth of healthy, displacement-resistant microbial ecological communities and promote research that disrupts microbial processes rather than simply attempting to kill the germs themselves. Despite the frightening death toll, Sachs's summary of promising new avenues of research offers hope. (Oct. 16)
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Review

“Ground-breaking.” *Newsweek*

“Could hardly be more timely.” *The New York Times*

“Brings the battle against dirt firmly into the 21st century.” *The Washington Post*

“Explains how our obsession with cleanliness led us to this point and details how science may still find a way past the danger.” *O, The Oprah Magazine*

About the Author

Jessica Snyder Sachs is a freelance science writer. Her first book, *Corpse: Nature, Forensics, and the Struggle to Pinpoint Time of Death*, was published in 2001. She lives in New Jersey.

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