Understanding of antibiotics

What are people’s experiences and behaviours with antibiotics, and what do they know about them?

Increased resistance to antibiotics poses one of the greatest global public health threats of our time. Drugs that were once lifesavers are becoming worthless, with common infections and minor injuries potentially returning as a major public health concern.

Antibiotic resistance is a term that many people are aware of, but what the term means is more elusive, indicating that there is still a need to communicate the issue. When asked what it means, few (nine per cent) spontaneously note that antibiotic resistance is specifically about bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics.

There are also still significant misperceptions about how antibiotics work, and the fact that they cannot treat viral infections (such as colds and the flu) or fungal infections.