



Missing Microbes: How the Overuse of Antibiotics Is Fueling Our Modern Plagues

By Martin J. Blaser MD

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A critically important and startling look at the harmful effects of overusing antibiotics, from the field's leading expert

Tracing one scientist's journey toward understanding the crucial importance of the microbiome, this revolutionary book will take readers to the forefront of trail-blazing research while revealing the damage that overuse of antibiotics is doing to our health: contributing to the rise of obesity, asthma, diabetes, and certain forms of cancer. In *Missing Microbes*, Dr. Martin Blaser invites us into the wilds of the human microbiome where for hundreds of thousands of years bacterial and human cells have existed in a peaceful symbiosis that is responsible for the health and equilibrium of our body. Now, this invisible eden is being irrevocably damaged by some of our most revered medical advances?antibiotics?threatening the extinction of our irreplaceable microbes with terrible health consequences. Taking us into both the lab and deep into the fields where these troubling effects can be witnessed firsthand, Blaser not only provides cutting edge evidence for the adverse effects of antibiotics, he tells us what we can do to avoid even more catastrophic health problems in the future.

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Editorial Review

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Starred Review You share your body with a vast population of microorganisms. Ten trillion human cells coexist with 100 trillion bacterial cells. The human microbiome—an elaborate ecology of microbes on us and within us—plays a major role in health, especially immunity and metabolism. But this collection of mostly pacifistic and beneficial species of bacteria that coevolved with human beings is increasingly endangered—by excessive use of antibiotics in humans and farm animals, overutilization of antiseptics and sanitizers, and the rising rate of cesarean sections. Blaser, an infectious-disease expert and researcher at NYU, is convinced that the swelling number of people with obesity, asthma, and esophageal reflux is a consequence of disrupting the microbiome. He warns that even short-term use of unnecessary antibiotics in children can have long-term implications. Antibiotics have been available for almost 70 years and have saved countless lives. Surprisingly, however, around 70 percent of antibiotics in use are allotted to livestock to promote growth and fatten them up. Human microecology is complex, even paradoxical: the bacteria *Helicobacter pylori* can make folks ill (ulcers and stomach cancer) and keep them well (protection against GERD, asthma, and esophageal cancer). Blaser's *Missing Microbes* is a masterful work of preventive health and superb science writing. --Tony Miksanek

Review

“The weight of evidence behind Dr. Blaser's cautions about antibiotics is overwhelming.” *?The New York Times*

“Unlike some books on medicine and microbes, Dr. Blaser's doesn't stir up fears of exotic diseases or pandemic 'superbugs' resistant to all known drugs. He focuses on a simpler but more profound concern: the damage that modern life inflicts on the vast number of microbes that all of us, even healthy people, carry inside us at all times.” *?The Wall Street Journal*

“*Missing Microbes* presents a surprisingly clear perspective on a complex problem.” *?Philadelphia Inquirer*

“In *Missing Microbes*, Martin Blaser sounds [an] alarm. He patiently and thoroughly builds a compelling case that the threat of antibiotic overuse goes far beyond resistant infections.” *?Nature*

“Readable and challenging, *Missing Microbes* provides a stimulus with which to probe existing dogma.” *?Science*

“Blaser presents a sensible plan for reclaiming our microbial balance and avoiding calamity both as a society...and on an individual level.” *?Discover*

“*Missing Microbes* blazes a new trail.” *?The Huffington Post*

“An engrossing examination of the relatively unheralded yet dominant form of life on Earth.” *?Publishers Weekly (starred review)*

“Blaser's *Missing Microbes* is a masterful work of preventative health and superb science writing.” *?Booklist (starred review)*

“Credit Blaser for displaying the wonders and importance of a vast underworld we are jeopardizing but cannot live without.” ?*Kirkus*

“Missing Microbes adds a new frontier towards understanding vastly underappreciated key contributions of the human microbiome to health and human disease. As a world leader in defining the microbiome, Dr. Blaser explains how disturbing its natural balance is affecting common conditions such as obesity and diabetes, long thought of as primarily nutrition and lifestyle related problems. Blaser's carefully and convincingly written book outlines new dimensions that need to be considered in fighting a number of common diseases and in promoting health and well-being.” ?*Richard Deckelbaum, Director, Institute of Human Nutrition, Columbia University*

“In a world that turns to antibiotics for every infection of the ear, sinuses, or skin, Dr. Blaser makes even the most nervous parent think twice about giving her child these ubiquitous drugs. Dr. Blaser contends that the excessive use of antibiotics--especially in children--is at the root of our most serious emerging modern maladies, from asthma and food allergies to obesity and certain cancers. He walks us through the science behind his theories and examines the duality of microbes, both as essential agents of good health and perpetrators of sickness. At a time when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention is campaigning for more judicious use of antibiotics, Dr. Blaser delivers a thoughtful, well-written and compelling case for why doctors need to be more cautious about prescribing these medications and why consumers should consider alternatives before taking them.” ?*Nirav R. Shah, MD, MPH, Commissioner of Health, New York*

“Dr. Blaser's credibility as a world class scientist and physician makes this exploration of our body's microbial world particularly provocative. *Missing Microbes* will make you rethink some fundamental ideas about infection. Blaser's gift is to write clearly and to take the reader on a fascinating journey through the paradoxes and insights about the teeming world within us.” ?*Abraham Verghese MD, author of Cutting for Stone*

“I have often wondered why kids today seem to have such a high incidence of asthma, ear infections, allergies, reflux esophagitis and so many other conditions that I rarely saw growing up. This mystery has been solved by the pioneering work of Dr. Marty Blaser and is communicated brilliantly in *Missing Microbes*. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of this book to your own health, the health of your children and grandchildren and to the health of our country. *Missing Microbes* is truly a must read.” ?*Arthur Agatston, author of The South Beach Diet*

“We live today in a world of modern plagues, defined by the alarming rise of asthma, diabetes, obesity, food allergies, and metabolic disorders. This is no accident, argues Dr. Blaser, the renowned medical researcher: the common link being the destruction of vital bacteria through the overuse of broad-spectrum antibiotics. *Missing Microbes* is science writing at its very best--crisply argued and beautifully written, with stunning insights about the human microbiome and workable solutions to an urgent global crisis.” ?*David M. Oshinsky, author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning Polio: An American Story*

“Why is it that you are fat, your son has asthma, and your 13-year-old daughter is six feet tall? Dr. Blaser says your bodies are missing vital, beneficial bacteria and I guarantee that after reading this book you will agree. Take a pass on the antibiotics and read *Missing Microbes*.” ?*Laurie Garrett, Pulitzer Prize winning writer and Senior Fellow for Global Health at the Council on Foreign Relations*

About the Author

Dr. Martin Blaser has studied the role of bacteria in human disease for over 30 years. He is the director of the Human Microbiome Program at NYU. He founded the *Bellevue Literary Review* and has been written about in newspapers including *The New Yorker*, *Nature*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The*

Wall Street Journal. His more than 100 media appearances include The Today Show, GMA, NPR, the BBC, The O'Reilly Factor, and CNN. He lives in New York City.

Users Review

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