The Robert Koch Institute

The Royal Prussian Institute for Infectious Diseases (RKI) is located in Berlin, Robert Koch applies for international health protection. The institute is named after the Nobel Prize winner Robert Koch, who directed the institute from 1904 to 1910. The RKI is responsible for collecting and evaluating data on the occurrence and spread of infectious diseases in Germany. The institute provides recommendations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including measures to contain the pandemic. The RKI advises the specialist public and policymakers on preventive measures and has a wide range of training and education opportunities.

A bioterrorist attack can occur at any time. It is therefore essential to be prepared for such an event. The RKI supports health authorities, police and other authorities to prepare for and respond to bioterrorist attacks. The institute is responsible for detecting, preventing and combating infectious diseases and improving the health situation in the country. The RKI has a central role in the field of public health in Germany and is an important reference for international agencies and partner countries.

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The initiative and protection against diseases is a task for society as a whole – and can only succeed if all work together.

1.3 The RKI’s prominent role in Germany’s vaccination policy

The RKI’s statement on SARS-CoV-2 and COVID-19 vaccination was one of the first in the world in winter 2020, when the first case was detected. Since then, the RKI has published on the disease burden and severity, and later the effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccines and treatments. The RKI’s continued monitoring of vaccine effectiveness and the role of vaccine variants is crucial for informing vaccination policy and public health decisions.

Avoiding hospital-acquired infections and antibiotic resistance

In Germany, an estimated 40,000 to 60,000 patients contract hospital infections every year – mostly wound infections after operations, urinary tract infections or pneumonia. About 20,000 of them die.

Some of these infections could be prevented by consistently adhering to hygiene measures, for example by better hand hygiene at all contacts with patients. The RKI advises, for example, that healthcare workers wear masks, in particular during procedures that could cause droplet spread.

Some infections can be treated with antibiotics, but many infections are caused by bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics. The RKI’s special focus is on antibiotic resistance, the spread of multiple-resistant bacteria and the occurrence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria, for example, methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA), also called MRSA (methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus). The RKI therefore advocates the One Health approach: human, animal and environmental health. The RKI-based Commission for Hospital Hygiene and Infection Prevention (STIKO) has prepared a list of disinfectants and information on how to use them efficiently. A list of disinfectants and information on how to use them efficiently is available on the STIKO website.