



# Nursing Home

## Antimicrobial Stewardship Guide

### Educate & Engage Residents, Family

## Toolkit To Educate and Engage Residents and Family Members

### Tool 2. Talking With Residents' Family Members—short checklist version

#### ➤ What are antibiotics?

- Antibiotics are medicines that fight infections caused by bacteria. Antibiotics work by targeting and killing harmful bacteria.

#### ➤ How do people get bacterial infections?

- Normally, your immune system helps control the bacteria you have. But, sometimes bacteria grow so quickly that your immune system can't keep up and then you may develop an infection that needs to be treated.

#### ➤ When are antibiotics used to treat urinary tract infections (UTIs)?

- A urinary tract infection (UTI) is an infection involving any part of the urinary system, including urethra, bladder, and kidney. If your family member is experiencing symptoms of infection and bacteria are found, she or he will typically be prescribed an antibiotic.
- Antibiotics do not help when there are no UTI symptoms. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may cause health problems.
- If your family member is not experiencing any symptoms, but a urine sample shows some bacteria, it may be better to wait and drink extra water. A doctor will ask a nurse to check on a resident more often and encourage drinking for up to a few days.

#### ➤ When are antibiotics used to treat lower respiratory tract infections (LRTIs)?

- There are many different kinds of respiratory tract infections, such as colds and coughs, the flu, pneumonia, and bronchitis. The most common symptoms of a respiratory infection that needs an antibiotic are a fever with a bad cough. A cough alone is typically not treated with an antibiotic.
- If your family member has a cough, but no fever or other symptoms, it is often better to wait. The doctor will request that nurses check often to see how he or she is feeling, take his/her temperature, and ask if s/he is experiencing any other symptoms. Your family member may be given acetaminophen (Tylenol) and/or a cough suppressant. He or she may be asked to drink more and rest with the head raised on pillows. A doctor may ask a nurse to check on a resident more often and encourage drinking for up to a few days.



➤ **What are the risks—or harms—of antibiotics?**

- Antibiotics are important for treating your family member when he or she definitely has an infection, but unneeded antibiotics can do more harm than good.
- Before taking an antibiotic, it is important to understand how antibiotics could harm or hurt your family member. There are five potential health problems that occur as a result of taking an antibiotic.
  1. Allergic reactions, like a rash or swelling.
  2. Side effects, such as a stomach upset.
  3. Drug interactions.
  4. An infection called *Clostridium difficile* or *C. diff*.
  5. Antibiotic resistance.
- Although we cannot be certain that any of these problems will occur, it is important that you and your family member are aware of them so that you and your family member can report any changes in how he or she feels to a nurse or doctor.

➤ **What is our nursing home doing to decrease the chance of these risks?**

- Improving the way we use antibiotics for our residents is one way we can protect your family member's health and ensure the safety of his or her care.
- Our nursing home is taking action in two ways to make sure that your family member and other residents get the right care at the right time.
  - First, we share information and help you understand the risks of antibiotics.
  - Second, we have an antibiotic stewardship program to make sure that antibiotics are used only when absolutely necessary—when there is a bacterial infection—and that residents get the right antibiotics, at the right time, for the right length of time.

➤ **What can you do to make sure that your family member gets the best care?**

- Talk with your family member and his or her doctor about the benefits and risks of taking an antibiotic.
- Tell someone, such as myself or another staff member, if you want more information—or have concerns—about antibiotics and the risks.
- When taking an antibiotic, your family member may experience several side effects such as a rash, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, and headaches. If you think your family member may be experiencing any of these side effects—or just feels different—let a nurse know immediately. This will help us work together to make sure he or she is getting the right care.

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