



Nursing Home Antimicrobial Stewardship Guide

Educate & Engage Residents, Family

Toolkit To Educate and Engage Residents and Family Members

Tool 3. Resident Information Sheet: Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria

One of your tests showed that you have a type of bacteria that cannot be treated with the antibiotics you have been taking. [Optional: Insert specific information about the bacteria found, the culture site, and which antibiotics are not effective.] It is important for you to know about this and learn how it may affect you.

This information sheet will answer questions and help you understand how we will treat your infection.

What Are Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria?

Antibiotics are drugs that kill bacteria that cause infections. Sometimes, the antibiotics usually used to treat infections are no longer effective against the bacteria. These bacteria are called “antibiotic-resistant bacteria.” When the bacteria are resistant to many antibiotics, they are called “**multidrug-resistant organisms,**” or “**MDROs.**” You are more likely to have a multidrug-resistant organism if you take antibiotics often or for long periods of time.

How Did I Get These Bacteria?

People may develop resistant bacteria on their bodies because they have taken antibiotics frequently or for a long time. When you take an antibiotic, a few of the bacteria may learn to “resist” the antibiotic and will not be killed by it. These bacteria can then multiply and are not affected by the antibiotic.

People can also get the resistant bacteria from someone else who has it. This can happen when someone touches you, or by touching something that has the bacteria on it, such as telephones, door handles, or bedrails.



How Are Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria Different From an Infection?

Everyone has bacteria living on or in them—in their gut, on their skin, and in their mouths. Some bacteria are good, and some are bad. Good bacteria help protect your body from bad bacteria. Many people have antibiotic-resistant bacteria living on them but do not develop an infection. This is called “**colonization.**” Good bacteria and your immune system are usually effective at keeping antibiotic-resistant bacteria in check. An infection can occur when the antibiotic-resistant bacteria grow quickly and are not controlled by your good bacteria or your immune system. If you get sick, your immune system may not be able to cope with the bacteria and you might develop an infection. Taking antibiotics for something else may kill off your good bacteria and this increases your risk of developing an infection from the resistant bacteria, so there should always be a very good reason for you to take antibiotics.

If I Get an Infection From the Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria, How Will It Be Treated?

If you develop an infection from the antibiotic-resistant bacteria, **your doctor will identify an antibiotic to treat or kill the resistant bacteria.** You may need to be tested to identify a better antibiotic for you—a sample from your infection will be sent to a lab and tested against a variety of antibiotics to find the best one to treat you. If you develop an infection from a multidrug-resistant organism, **your doctor may also have to try more than one antibiotic** to find one that will work for your infection.

Will I Ever Get Rid of the Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria?

Many people never get rid of the antibiotic-resistant bacteria completely, but stay colonized with it—meaning, it continues to live on or in them, often without causing any more infections. Knowing that you have this type of bacteria helps you and your health care providers **take special precautions to help prevent any infections** from developing and to avoid spreading the bacteria to others.

What Should I Do now That I Know I Have Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria?

You can take steps to prevent spreading the bacteria to other people or to places on your body where the bacteria might cause an infection:

- **Always wash your hands** with soap and warm water before eating, after using the bathroom, after coughing or sneezing, or after any contact with bodily fluids, such as urine or blood.
- **Let staff know** about any cuts, scrapes, or wounds that you have so that they can be covered with a bandage.
- **Remind your visitors to wash their hands** when they come in to and leave the nursing home.
- **Avoid spending time with people who:** exhibit symptoms of an infection such as fever, cough or cold, those who have had surgery recently, or those who are taking antibiotics because they may be more at risk of getting an infection.
- Nursing home staff may ask you to take other preventive steps, depending on the type of bacteria you have. If you go to the hospital, the staff there may also ask you to take other steps to prevent spreading the bacteria.

Remember, you can always talk to a nurse or other health care provider about antibiotic-resistant bacteria and how it may affect your health and health care. For more information about antibiotic resistance, visit:

CDC: Antibiotic/Antimicrobial Resistance <http://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/about.html>

FDA: Antibiotics and Antibiotic Resistance <http://www.fda.gov/Drugs/ResourcesForYou/Consumers/BuyingUsingMedicineSafely/AntibioticsandAntibioticResistance/default.htm>

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