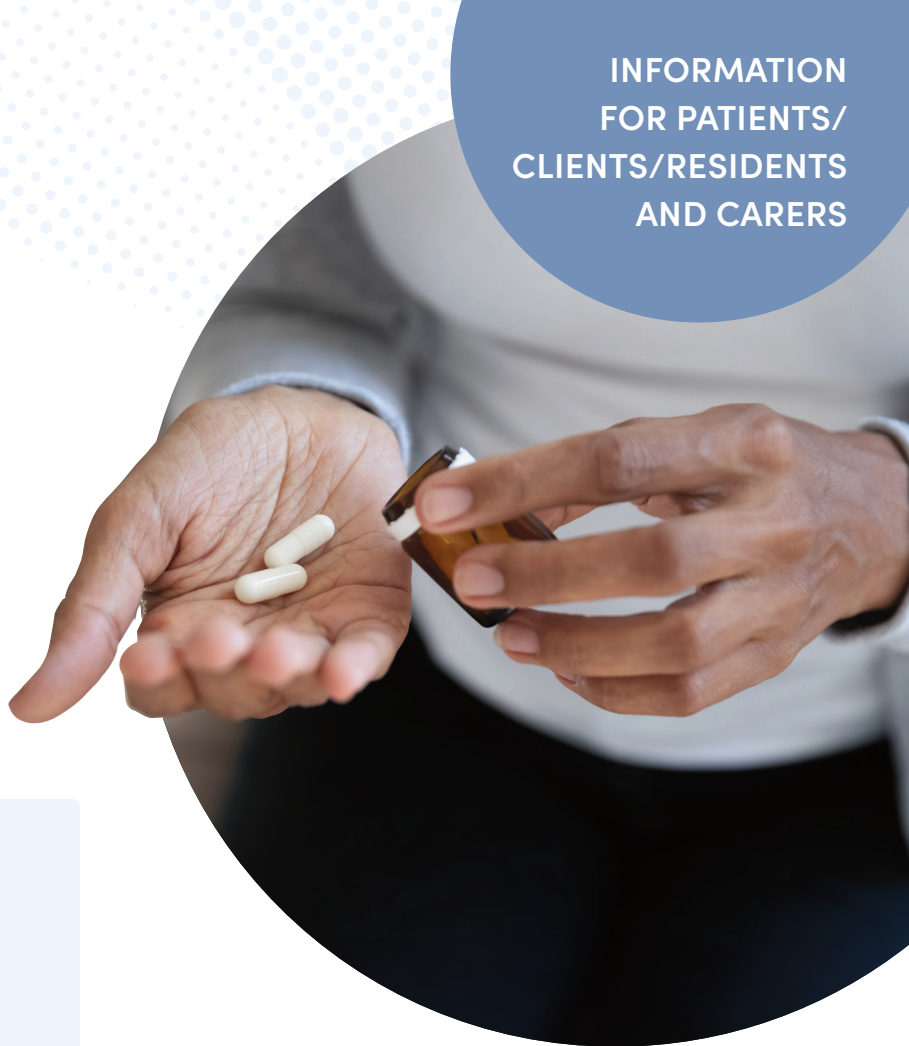


RECEIVING ANTIBIOTICS

INFORMATION
FOR PATIENTS/
CLIENTS/RESIDENTS
AND CARERS

This information sheet describes what an antibiotic is, everything you need to know about antibiotics and antibiotic resistance, and how you need to continue your antibiotic treatment after your discharge.



WHAT IS AN ANTIBIOTIC?

Antibiotics are medicines that are used to **treat or prevent infections**. They work by killing or stopping the growth of 'bugs' (bacteria or fungi) that may be causing a problem in your body. **Antibiotics do not work on infections caused by viruses.** Antibiotics can be given in different ways, and are commonly provided as tablets, syrups, injections, or eye drops. At the time of prescribing antibiotics, **your doctor will discuss your individual needs and recommend a suitable product.**

RECEIVING ANTIBIOTICS

Your treating doctor will discuss whether you need antibiotics based on your symptoms and test results. At the time of prescribing antibiotics, your doctor will discuss your individual needs and recommend a suitable antibiotic.

Antibiotics are usually prescribed for treating a possible or known infection. Patients will receive a 'course' of antibiotics and this means taking them for a set period of time, or until the infection has completely gone. Sometimes antibiotics will be used to prevent an infection. If you are having a medical procedure that could increase your risk of infection, an

antibiotic may be recommended before, during or shortly after the procedure. Your doctor may also recommend antibiotics if your immune system is too weak to fight off a serious infection.

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MY ANTIBIOTIC TREATMENT?

Your treating doctor will look at the need for antibiotics every day, and will talk to you about this as you are part of the team making this decision about your treatments. When you are prescribed an antibiotic, you and your doctor should discuss:

- Why an antibiotic is being recommended for you
- The name of the antibiotic
- How it will be given to you
- How long you are likely to be on the antibiotic
- Side effects that you could experience and what to do if they occur

If you have not discussed and received this information or just need to know more, please ask your treating doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

RESISTANCE TO ANTIBIOTICS

When bacteria develop new ways to defend against antibiotics, it is called 'antibiotic resistance'. This means that an antibiotic which used to work may no longer be able to cure your infection. One of the main causes of antibiotic resistance is antibiotics being used when they are not needed (e.g. for a common cold or flu). Your doctor will discuss whether you need antibiotics based on your symptoms and test results.

HOW MIGHT ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANCE AFFECT ME?

Some types of bacteria have become resistant to many different antibiotics. These bacteria may be called 'superbugs' in news and television reports. Infections caused by superbugs are more difficult to treat and have a higher risk of complications. Your treating doctor can perform tests and based on the results will review and discuss suitable treatment options. This may mean changing to a different antibiotic.

RECEIVING ANTIBIOTICS ON DISCHARGE

BEFORE you leave the hospital or service

Your antibiotic treatment plan will be discussed with you, including:

- Whether your antibiotic is being continued or changed on discharge
- How your antibiotics will be supplied
- How to take your antibiotic, including when to take it and for how long
- Potential side effects, and what to do if they happen to you
- Follow-up advice, including when you need to be reviewed by your General Practitioner (GP)

If you would like someone to explain or repeat this information, please ask to speak to your treating doctor, nurse or pharmacist. You can also ask for this information to be written down so you can look at it later.

AFTER you leave the hospital or service

- Take your antibiotics exactly as instructed on the label
- Store your antibiotics exactly as instructed on the label
- If you have trouble remembering to take your antibiotics, set an alarm or ask family and friends to remind you
- Finish the whole course, unless your treating doctor tells you to stop
- Speak to your pharmacist or treating doctor about questions, concerns or side effects

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

Australian Government, Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. Infographic – Antimicrobial Stewardship

Clinical Excellence Commission (CEC) (2014). Receiving Antibiotics in Hospitals: Information for Patients and Carers.

DISCLAIMER: This leaflet is provided for information only. It is not intended to substitute for medical advice and should not be used to determine actual treatment choices or decisions.



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