

ANTIMICROBIAL STEWARDSHIP

In November 2023, the focus is on Antimicrobial Stewardship, especially during Antimicrobial Awareness Week from 18-24 November.

This initiative aims to promote the responsible use of antibiotics to combat antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which is crucial in aged care settings where older adults are more vulnerable to infections.

Overuse or misuse of antibiotics can lead to resistant infections, posing risks to both residents and staff.

Ensuring antibiotics are used only when necessary is essential for safeguarding community health.

did you know ...

according to Aged Care National Antimicrobial Prescribing Survey (ACNAPS)

- 11.7% of residents treated for UTIs met the McGeer et al. definition and criteria for UTI.
- The most commonly prescribed antimicrobial was Clotrimazole, an Antifungal Cream (23.9%), closely followed by cefalexin at 20.4%.
- Almost ONE IN SIX antimicrobials were prescribed for PRN use.
- Incomplete documentation of indication and review continues to be higher in facilities not using electronic Prescribing Systems.
- Despite about 12% of aged care residents taking antimicrobials on any given day, only one-quarter of these clients are actually displaying signs of infection

Antibiotics and Aged Care

Aged care residents are often frail, have weak immune systems and live in close proximity to others, making them more susceptible to developing infections. This, in turn, correlates to increased antibiotic use in these facilities (Australian Government 2022b).

However, with the World Health Organisation declaring AntiMicrobial Resistance (AMR) a major health concern, the prevalence of antibiotics in aged care poses a significant threat to a vulnerable population.

In order to minimise the risk of antibiotic-resistant infections emerging and spreading in these environments, it is critical to prescribe and manage antibiotics appropriately.

Using antibiotics appropriately means:

- ✓ Accurately assessing the client
- ✓ Confirming the client's condition
- ✓ Prescribing the correct antibiotic
- ✓ Prescribing the correct dose
- ✓ Administering antibiotics through the correct route
- ✓ Administering antibiotics at the correct time
- ✓ Administering antibiotics for the correct duration of time
- ✓ Conducting timely reviews.

Antibiotic Use Under the Strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards

Standard 5: Clinical Care -

Outcome 5.2: Preventing and controlling infections in clinical care

under the strengthened Aged Care Quality Standards (Action 5.2.1) requires aged care providers to establish an antimicrobial stewardship system that is in line with contemporary, evidence-based practice and is appropriate for the service context (ACQSC 2024).

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NOTE - PRN prescribing of antimicrobials is not recommended, as it encourages sporadic use which may be harmful and ineffective. Clinical review of antimicrobials, especially at the time of infection onset, may be reduced.
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Review
antibiotic
prescribing

Improve
documentation

Use
microbiological
testing

Infection Control

One of the most important components of antibiotic stewardship is practising infection control procedures, and consequently, minimising the transmission of infections that require antibiotic treatment in the first place (Australian Government 2022e).

Facilities should be practising standard precautions for infection prevention and control, including:

- Hand hygiene
- PPE
- Safe use and disposal of sharps
- Appropriate reprocessing of reusable medical equipment and instruments
- Regular environmental cleaning
- Respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette
- Aseptic Non Touch Technique
- Appropriate waste management
- Vaccination.
- Benchmarked Antimicrobial usage against industry average

Managing Multi-resistant Organisms (MRO) in Aged Care

If an older person is colonised with a MRO but is not experiencing any signs or symptoms of infection:

- The use of standard precautions alone is appropriate as long as the person can manage their own personal hygiene
- The person should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before group activities or communal dining.

If an older person has an active MRO infection:

- **Both standard and contact precautions** need to be followed
- Aged care workers should perform hand hygiene, don gloves and gowns/aprons when providing care to the person
- Single-use or dedicated equipment should be used
- The person should be placed in a single room if possible and unnecessary movement around the facility should be reduced
- Infected wound sites should be covered, and wound dressings need to be changed frequently
- Continence should be appropriately managed
- The person, as well as others, should be encouraged to perform hand hygiene before and after group activities

Improving Antibiotic Stewardship in Aged Care

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Five ways to improve safety of care for residents prescribed Antimicrobials

1 Provide access to and use evidence-based infection assessment tools and guidelines

to improve antibiotic prescribing in relation to antibiotic choice, duration and volume of topical antibiotic use.



2 Review antibiotic prescribing

including preprescriptions for prophylaxis, as required (prn) administration and topical antibiotic use.



Improve documentation and use the charts that are consistent with the National Residential Medication Chart.



4 Use microbiological testing

to confirm infections and inform antibiotic treatment.



5 Implement infection prevention and control practices

- to reduce the risk of residents acquiring a preventable infection
- to support appropriate management of infections



Some recommended resources for AMS in aged care facilities -

- Therapeutic Guidelines for Antimicrobial prescribing - ([gpsummary_v15.pdf \(safetyandquality.gov.au\)](#))
- Antimicrobial resistance and older People - [antibiotic resistance and older people factsheet.pdf](#)
- Information Resource for consumers and their Carers - [Do I really need antibiotics?](#)
- Asymptomatic Bacteriuria - [fact sheet - asymptomatic bacteriuria](#)
- Dipstick analysis in aged care facilities - [To Dip or Not to Dip flyer](#)
- Topical Anti Fungals in aged care facilities
 - [Assessing and treating common fungal infections](#)
 - [Topical antifungals tips.pdf \(multiscreensite.com\)](#)
 - [Information on topical antifungals: Improving antimicrobial prescribing for residents of aged care homes](#)