

# IPC Advice Bulletin for Care Home Staff

## Issue No. 07 – November 2017

To further support Care Home Staff, here is some information on good infection prevention and control (IPC) practice.

### World Antibiotic Awareness Week, 13-19 November 2017

The World Health Organisation (WHO), has launched a World Antibiotic Awareness campaign this week, to increase awareness of Antimicrobial resistance and its impact upon healthcare associated infection and their key messages are:

- Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) threatens effective treatment and prevention of an increasing range of infections
- AMR is a serious threat to public health globally, requiring action across all government sectors and society
- Major surgery and cancer chemotherapy would be compromised without effective antibiotics
- Resistant infections have higher costs due to prolonged hospitalisation, and use of more expensive drugs
- Drug resistance is complicating treatments for TB, HIV and Malaria

#### Quiz: How much do you know about antibiotic resistance?

1. Antibiotics are powerful medicines that help to fight:

- Viruses  
 Bacteria  
 All microbes

Answer: Antibiotics are medicines that treat bacterial infections. They do not cure infections caused by viruses, such as the common cold or flu. Taking antibiotics when you do NOT need them can prevent them working when you DO need them.

2. Antibiotic resistance happens when my body becomes resistant to antibiotics:

- True  
 False

Answer: False. Antibiotics target bacteria, killing or weakening them and helping you to fight off infections. Your body does not develop resistance to antibiotics; it is the bacteria which becomes resistant to antibiotics through genetic changes. This means that if you get an antibiotic-resistant bacterial infection, the usual antibiotics used to fight it will no longer be effective. A less accessible or last resort antibiotic will then need to be used, and in some cases options for potential active antibiotics could run out.

3. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria can spread to humans through:

- Contact with a person who has an antibiotic-resistant infection  
 Contact with something that has been touched by a person who has an antibiotic-resistant infection, e.g. a health-workers' hands or instruments in a health facility with poor hygiene  
 Contact with a live animal, food or water carrying antibiotic-resistant bacteria  
 All of the above

Answer: Antibiotics are given to humans, animals, fish and crops. Antibiotic resistance happens when bacteria change and become resistant to the antibiotics used to treat the infections they cause. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria spread through contact with humans, animals, food or environment that are carrying them. You can help to prevent the spread of infections by regularly washing your hands, covering your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze, and practising safer sex.

4. What can happen if I get an antibiotic-resistant infection:

- I may be sick for longer  
 I may have to visit my doctor more or be treated in hospital  
 I may need more expensive medicine that may cause side effects

Answer: Antibiotic resistance is happening everywhere in the world, affecting people of all ages. It is one of the biggest threats to public health today. Antibiotic resistant infections can take longer to treat, may require more frequent doctor visits, possible hospital stays, more severe side effects and expensive treatments. Serious, isn't it?

5. Antibiotic resistance is already out of control and it's only getting worse. There's nothing I can do:

- True  
 False

Answer: While antibiotic resistance occurs naturally over time, the misuse and over-use of antibiotics in plants, animals and humans has accelerated this process to dangerously high levels. BUT it's not too late to reduce the impact of antibiotic resistance and we all have a part to play in preserving the effectiveness of antibiotics.

6. I can help tackle antibiotic resistance if I:

- Share my antibiotics with my family when they are sick  
 Get antibiotics as soon as I feel sick—either directly from the pharmacy or a friend  
 Keep my vaccinations up to date

Answer: Taking action to prevent infections, such as by getting vaccinated, will stop you from getting sick and reduce your need for antibiotics. Even small actions can make a difference, like washing your hands regularly to prevent the spread of infection. And remember: if you do get sick, always consult your doctor about whether you need antibiotics. It is important to follow your doctor's advice, and not to share or use leftover antibiotics.

Visit our website to find lots of IPC resources, many of which are free to download.

[www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk)