

LHI Retirement Services is celebrating Antimicrobial Awareness Week (18.01.2021-22.1.202) and supporting residents and clients to live a healthy life.

“Antimicrobials: Handle with care. United to preserve antimicrobials”

Everyone loves Antibiotics – but are they the miracle drug?

In the lead up to the global Antibiotic Awareness Week which happens each year worldwide - it is good to acknowledge the discovery and development of antibiotics which meant people could be treated for many life threatening infections where previously there was no cure; antibiotics were hailed as a miracle or wonder drug.

However, the emergence of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) means some infections may once again become life threatening.

Infection with bacteria resistant to antibiotics may increasingly complicate or compromise some diseases.

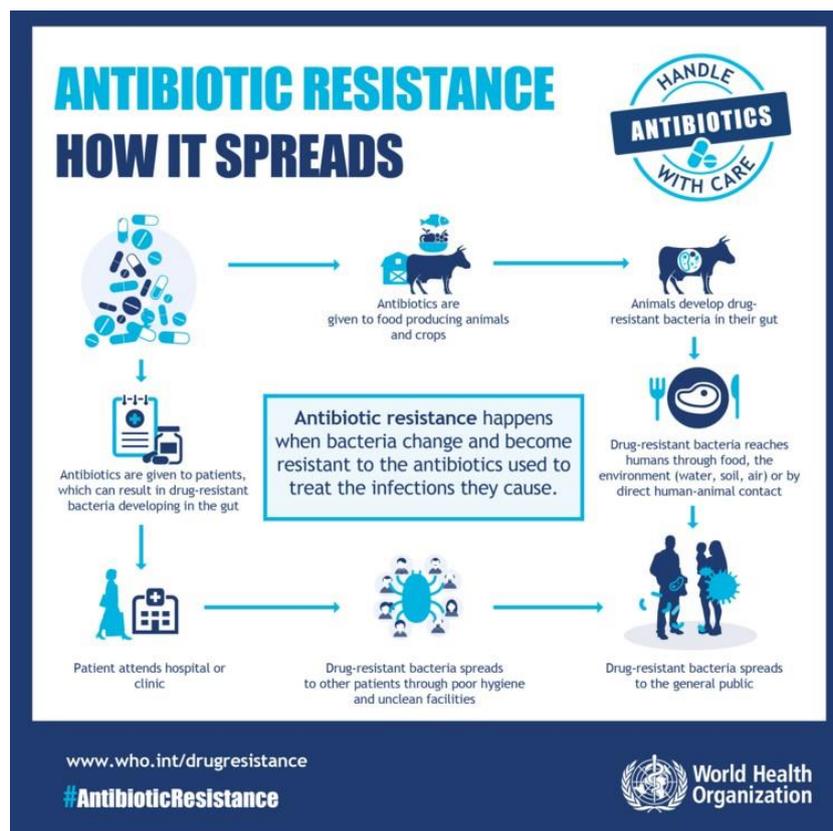
Antimicrobial resistance is an urgent global health priority, with the World Health Organization (WHO) describing it as a looming crisis and the development of practices and procedures to reduce the risk of resistance an important priority and therefore the development of Antimicrobial Stewardship an important and integral part of saving life

Previously, Antimicrobial Stewardship activities largely focused on the hospital sector where they have been shown to decrease inappropriate antimicrobial usage, decrease the incidence of antimicrobial resistance, improve patient outcomes and reduce preventable adverse consequences of antimicrobial use.

The objective of Antimicrobial stewardship in aged care is to implement a program to reduce antimicrobial resistance within the residential aged care setting.

Antibiotic resistance is an increasing problem in aged care

Older persons in aged care may have an increased susceptibility to infections due to frailty, reduced functional and nutritional status, multiple co-morbidities and compromised immune function. Between half to three-quarters of older persons in long term care receive at least one course of antibiotics each year. The spread of bacteria between residents can be increased by living in close proximity, resident-nurse/carer contact and resident-resident contact, as well as transfers from residential aged care homes to hospital and back again. There can be cross-transmission of resistant bacteria from person to person irrespective of the individual's exposure to an antibiotic.



Why is antimicrobial resistance increasing?

- **Misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants** – Misuse and overuse of antimicrobials in humans, animals and plants are the main drivers in the development of drug-resistant infections. Poor medical prescribing practices and patient adherence to treatment also contribute. For example, antibiotics kill bacteria, but they cannot kill viral infections like colds and flu. Often they are incorrectly prescribed for those illnesses, or taken without proper medical oversight. Antibiotics are also commonly overused in farm animals and agriculture.
- **Lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for both humans and animals** – Lack of clean water and sanitation in health care facilities, farms and community settings and inadequate infection prevention and control promotes the emergence and spread of drug-resistant infections.
- **COVID-19** – The misuse of antibiotics during COVID-19 pandemic could lead to accelerated emergence and spread of antimicrobial resistance. COVID-19 is caused by a virus, not by a bacteria and therefore antibiotics should not be used to prevent or treat viral infections, unless bacterial infections are also present.

What is being done to curb antibiotic resistance in Australia in aged care?

The Australian Department of Health released a National Antimicrobial Resistance Strategy 2015 -2019, this includes many strategies across all sectors including aged care and not only in humans but also in agriculture.

The Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care is developing and implementing national surveillance of AMR. This includes establishing surveillance systems in all health settings, including aged care homes, to better understand the usage of antibiotics and emerging AMR trends that could impact on public health.

What is LHI Retirement Service doing?

As part of surveying the use of antimicrobials (including antibiotics) LHI Retirement Services has taken part in the National Antimicrobial Prescribing Survey in residential care for the last 4 years and has reduced the amount of antimicrobials prescribed and used.

We are also undertaking various internal audits in residential care to gather information on antimicrobial use and using that information to ensure the practice of prescribing antimicrobials is appropriate and reasonable based upon individual needs.

Also to prevent the spread of resistant bacteria and germs, it is important that staff who look after our residents and clients continue to undertake the 5 moments of hand hygiene as well as practice correct infection control techniques (you can ask the staff member who attends you or your family member to see if they have washed their hands prior to attending to the you or your family member's care needs)

Also over the week in January (18.1.2021-22.1.2021) LHI Retirement Services will be posting information and undertaking various activities with staff and residents to support this important campaign.

For further information please contact Barry Lowe Infection Control Coordinator

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STAY SAFE