

Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) in Aged Care

Antimicrobial Stewardship (AMS) is the ongoing effort by a provider (and clinical caregivers) to minimise the use of antimicrobial medicines.

Inappropriate antimicrobial use contributes to antimicrobial resistance (AMR), which has become a widespread, global problem. Antimicrobial resistance occurs when microbes evolve mechanisms that protect them from the effects of antimicrobials making them ineffective. National reporting indicates concerning, ongoing levels of inappropriate antimicrobial use in Australian residential aged care services.

- Antimicrobials – including antibiotics, antivirals, antifungals, and antiparasitics – are medicines used to prevent and treat infectious diseases.
- The cause of antibiotic resistance is antibiotic use. When we use antibiotics, some bacteria die, but resistant bacteria can survive and multiply.

To minimise antibiotic resistance, Australian guidelines recommend that an antibiotic should only be prescribed:

When benefits to the patient are likely to be substantial

At the appropriate dose and for the appropriate duration

With the narrowest spectrum to treat the likely pathogen

The aim of the Commission's Antimicrobial Stewardship work is to:

Improve the safe and appropriate use of antimicrobials

Reduce resident harm

Prevent and contain antimicrobial resistance in aged care services

What can you do to improve Antimicrobial Stewardship?

- Prevent: Always use standard infection control precautions when working with residents, especially good hand hygiene, to reduce the spread of infections. Encourage vaccination.
- Identify: Correctly identifying and diagnosing infections using laboratory testing (when available) enables prescribers to target antimicrobial therapy or the early cessation of therapy.
- Alternative Management: e.g. Analgesics for pain, Antipyretics for temperature. Follow Hydration, Continence, Pressure care and Wound management guidelines.

Don't forget...

- The overuse of antibiotics makes resistant bacteria more common
- Antibiotics don't work against all infections!



It's good to
be healthy.