

## What do I need to know about my antibiotic treatment?

When you are prescribed an antibiotic, your doctor should discuss:

- ▶ **Why** an antibiotic will be recommended for you
- ▶ The **name** of the antibiotic
- ▶ **How** it will be given to you while in hospital
- ▶ **How long** you are likely to be on the antibiotic
- ▶ **Side effects** that you may experience



If you have not received this information, please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.

Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) in the form of a patient leaflet is available for most antibiotics. You can ask for a printed copy, or access these leaflets online through the NPS MedicineWise website:

<http://www.nps.org.au/>

## Before you leave the hospital

You should receive information about your antibiotic treatment plan, 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 GP.

Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will be available to explain or repeat this information. You can also ask for it to be written down so you can look at it later.

## After you leave the hospital

- Take your antibiotics as instructed
- 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 doctor tells you to stop
- Speak to a pharmacist or doctor if you have questions, concerns or side effects

DISCLAIMER: This brochure 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.

Released October 2014, © Clinical Excellence Commission 2014 SHPN (CEC) 140408

# RECEIVING ANTIBIOTICS IN HOSPITAL



Information for patients & carers

## 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 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 needs and recommend a suitable product for you.



## Receiving antibiotics in hospital

Antibiotics are usually prescribed for treating a possible or known infection. Patients will receive a 'course' of antibiotics. This means taking antibiotics 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.

## 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 treat 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). When you are in hospital, your doctor will discuss whether you need antibiotics based on your symptoms and test results.

### How could antibiotic resistance affect me as a patient?

Some types of bacteria have become resistant to many different antibiotic treatments. 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. Hospitals have tests they can perform which may indicate if you have a resistant infection. When test results become available, your doctor will review and discuss suitable treatment options. This may mean changing your treatment to a different antibiotic.

## Improving our antibiotic use

Our hospitals are committed to ensuring that the right type and dose of antibiotic is used for each patient. Efforts to improve antibiotic use are coordinated by teams of doctors, nurses, pharmacists and hospital managers. You may meet people from this team during your hospital stay.

### Activities to improve antibiotic use in this hospital may include:



Collecting information about antibiotic resistant infections



Reserving some antibiotics for use only in specific conditions



Promoting treatment guidelines to help doctors choose the most suitable antibiotic for each patient



Monitoring which antibiotics are being used and why

If you have questions or concerns about your infection, treatment options or antibiotic resistance in general, please speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist.