

Long-term Care Antibiotic Awareness



What to Know about Urinary Tract Infections

Urinary tract infections (UTI) are one of the most common infections among residents of long-term care facilities. UTIs occur when bacteria get into the organs of the urinary tract such as the bladder, urethra, and sometimes even the kidneys. Symptoms of UTIs may include:

- ❖ Need to pass urine frequently
- ❖ Burning while passing urine
- ❖ Pressure in the lower belly
- ❖ Low back pain
- ❖ Blood in the urine
- ❖ Foul smell in the urine

To diagnose a UTI when symptoms develop, a urine sample is collected and tested to see if there are bacteria present. However, getting an accurate diagnosis can be challenging for a variety of reasons. The elderly in long-term care settings are often not able to clearly tell someone about their symptoms. Health care staff may rely on looking for changes in the residents' behavior or changes in bathroom habits as clues. Since bacteria can normally live in the bladder, particularly in the elderly, finding bacteria in the urine alone is not enough to diagnose a UTI.

About Antibiotics

Antibiotics are only intended for treating infections caused by bacteria. They are not effective against illness caused by viruses. Antibiotics should not be used when bacteria are found in the bladder but are not causing symptoms. Using antibiotics when they are not needed, or are used incorrectly, can lead to antibiotic resistance which means that common antibiotics may not get rid of infections caused by these germs. Other unwanted problems such as bad reactions, diarrhea, C. diff, and allergies can also occur. Residents who use antibiotics are at increased risk of getting a C. diff infection. If an antibiotic is given, the resident should take the medicine as instructed. The nursing staff will ensure that all doses are given.