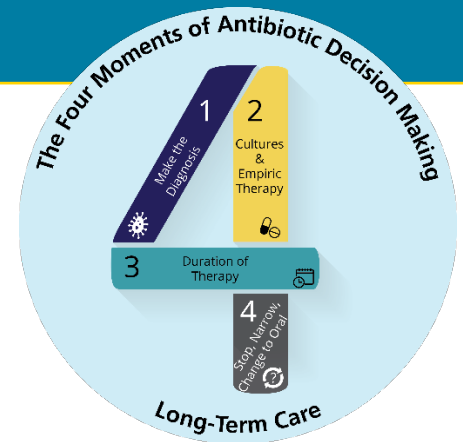


Talking With Residents and Family Members About Antibiotics

The last time this happened, the doctor prescribed an antibiotic and my family member got better.

Can't we do that again... just in case?



Five potential health problems can occur as a result of taking an antibiotic.

1. Allergic reactions

People may develop a rash or swelling. Allergic reactions don't happen often, but when they do they can cause people to feel pretty uncomfortable.

2. Side effects

Most antibiotics cause only mild side effects, such as stomach upset. But side effects vary a lot from person to person, and from antibiotic to antibiotic.

3. Interactions with other medications

Some antibiotics interact with certain drugs. Medications such as antacids, the anticoagulant warfarin (e.g., Coumadin®), blood pressure medications, or antidiabetic medications can interact with antibiotics. Some interactions can be harmful, for example by causing organ damage.

4. Infection with *Clostridioides difficile* or *C. diff*.

C. diff is bacteria that can cause diarrhea, pain or cramping in the stomach, weight loss, fever, and dehydration. Someone is much more likely to get a *C. diff* infection after taking antibiotics. Once a person has *C. diff*, he or she can get it again more easily.

5. Antibiotic resistance

Antibiotics kill bacteria. Sometimes not all of the bacteria are killed. The strongest ones are left to grow and spread. A person can get sick again, and this time the bacteria will be harder to kill because the bacteria are resistant to the antibiotics. In other words, the more often you use an antibiotic, the greater the chance that the antibiotic won't kill the bacteria.

As bacteria become more resistant to antibiotics, it becomes harder to find effective antibiotics. Your family member may also have to be put in isolation to prevent resistant bacteria from spreading to other residents.

The best way to reduce these risks is to only use antibiotics when necessary.