

CONSULTANT PHARMACISTS:  
BE ANTIBIOTICS AWARE

# Use the Shortest Effective Antibiotic Duration



## SCENARIO

When reviewing antibiotic orders during the monthly medication review, you find that the average duration for an antibiotic course is 10 days.

One way to improve antibiotic use is to focus on shortening antibiotic therapy durations that are longer than necessary. In residents who have a timely clinical response, guidelines suggest the following durations for uncomplicated infections:

- **Community-acquired pneumonia:** 5 days<sup>1</sup>
- **Hospital-acquired pneumonia:** 7 days<sup>2</sup>
- **Non-purulent cellulitis:** 5 days<sup>3</sup>

Duration of therapy for urinary tract infections (UTI) can vary based on the drug used, and whether the resident has a catheter or a complicated UTI.

### Consultant pharmacists can help optimize antibiotic duration by:



1. Determining and documenting the prescribed length of therapy for every antibiotic order.



2. Discussing shortening the duration with the healthcare professional to be consistent with guidelines if the resident had an uncomplicated clinical course and responded appropriately to treatment.

*The scenarios and recommendations are applicable to most nursing home residents. Prior to making recommendations, always assess the individual resident, review the documentation in the medical record, discuss with facility staff, and use your clinical judgment. Follow your facility's protocols and treatment guidelines when applicable.*

#### References:

1. Mandell LA, et al. Clin Infect Dis. 2007 Mar;44(Supplement\_2):S27-72.
2. Kalil AC, et al. Clin Infect Dis. 2016 Sep;63(5):e61-111.
3. Stevens DL, et al. Clin Infect Dis. 2014 Jul;59(2):e10-52.



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