



Clostridioides difficile (C. diff)

This information is intended to assist patients in attaining a better understanding of *Clostridioides difficile*.

What Is Clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides difficile (aka *C.difficile* or *C. diff*) is a germ that normally lives in the large intestine and can be present in the stool of healthy individuals. A *C.difficile* infection most commonly occurs in people who have recently had a course of antibiotics and are in hospital. Toxins released by this germ can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. *C.difficile* infections are usually mild but sometimes they can be severe. Old age, presence of other serious illnesses and poor overall health may increase the risk of severe disease.

The main symptoms of a *C.difficile* infection include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness

If you have symptoms of a *C.difficile* infection, your doctor will ask for a sample of your stool. The laboratory will test the sample to see if *C.difficile* toxins are present.

How is a C.difficile infection treated?

The decision to treat a *C.difficile* infection depends on the severity of the illness. Treatment may not be needed if you have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all but are known to carry the germ (bacteria) in your gut. However, treatment with specific antibiotics may be needed in more severe cases.

How does C.difficile spread?

C.difficile produces spores (like seeds) that are very hardy and resistant to high temperatures and certain cleaning agents. When a person has a *C.difficile* infection, the germs in their stool that release these spores can dirty surfaces and items they come in contact with (e.g. toilets, handles, bed pans, clothing, bedding, etc.). The germs may then get on food or into the mouth and then swallowed. Germs such as *C.difficile* are may also be spread from the hands of patients or healthcare workers.

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How do I prevent the spread of C.difficile to others?

If you have C.difficile in your stool you will be moved to a private room until you are free of diarrhea for at least 2 days. You are asked to stay in your room unless you are taken to another area of the hospital for a medical procedure. Everyone who enters your room will wear a gown and gloves and **MUST** wash their hands when leaving your room.

Always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the washroom. Hand washing is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of germs. Because C.difficile bacteria spores can live for on surface and objects for a long time, your room will be cleaned twice daily by hospital staff using a bleach solution.

What should I do when I go home?

Healthy people like your family, friends and caregivers are at very low risk for getting a C.difficile infection. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom. Do not share personal care items.

Use a bleach-based disinfectant, such as Clorox, to clean commonly touched hard surfaces in the home (faucets, door handles, countertops, etc.). Pay special attention to areas such as the toilet and bathroom sink.

Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses, or other care providers that you have C.difficile. This will help prevent spread to others.

It is very important to take all your medications as prescribed by your doctor. You should not take any drugs from the pharmacy to stop your diarrhea. If diarrhea persists, or comes back, contact your doctor.