



In this document the term patient is inclusive of patient, resident and client.

What is *Clostridioides difficile* infection?

Clostridioides difficile (also known as *C. difficile* or *C. diff*) is a common bacteria found in the bowel (intestines). *C. diff* infection happens when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the *C. diff* to grow. When *C. diff* grows it produces toxins (poisons) which can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. *C. diff* infection is usually mild, but may be severe, possibly requiring surgery.

What are the symptoms?

Symptoms include:

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain

What are the risk factors?

- Recent history of antibiotic use
- Receiving treatment with proton pump inhibitors and/or H2 blockers
- Being in hospital or long-term care (especially older or debilitated patients)
- Bowel diseases or bowel surgery
- Immunosuppressive therapy
- Previous infection or known exposure to the bacteria

How do you get *C. diff*?

- When a person has *C. diff*, the bacteria in their stool can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, bedpans or commode chairs, handles, bedrails, countertops, etc. *C. diff* can survive on surfaces for a long time if they are not properly cleaned and disinfected.
- Our hands may become contaminated when touching these items.
- If we then touch our mouths without washing our hands, we can become infected.
- Our soiled hands can also spread the bacteria to other surfaces.

Can *C. diff* be treated?

Treatment depends on how sick you are with *C. diff* infection. People with mild symptoms may not need treatment. People with severe disease may need to take an antibiotic that kills the *C. diff* bacteria. In some cases, surgery or fecal transplant may be required.





What happens if I have *C. diff* in a hospital or Long Term Care home?

If you have *C. diff*, special precautions will be taken to prevent it from spreading to other patients. These precautions include:

- Single room accommodation, with a private bathroom, if possible (the door can remain open).
- Posting a sign outside your door to remind others who enter your room about the need for special precautions.
- Requiring everyone who enters your room to wear a long-sleeved gown and gloves.
- Restricting your activities outside the room.
- Requiring everyone to wash their hands with soap and water when leaving your room.

If I have *C. diff*, can I have visitors?

Yes. We ask that your visitors follow the instructions on the sign posted on your door and clean their hands before and after visiting you.

What should I do at home?

To prevent the spread of *C. diff* at home:

- If you have diarrhea, using a separate toilet at home is preferred, if possible. If you use bar soap, do not share it with others, and always use your own towel to dry.
- Hand sanitizer does not kill *C. diff*. Everyone in your home (including you) should wash their hands often with soap (preferably liquid) and water, especially:
 - * After using the bathroom (or helping someone with their personal hygiene or going to the toilet)
 - * Before preparing or eating food
 - * After handling soiled laundry
- Clean counters, sinks, bathrooms, door handles, and other frequently-touched surfaces with a regular household cleaner often. Pay special attention to areas (such as the toilet) that may be heavily soiled and make sure to scrub the surfaces.
 - * After cleaning, disinfect the same surfaces using a diluted bleach solution (i.e., 1 part household bleach mixed with 9 parts water). Use a clean cloth to dampen the surface with the bleach solution and allow to air dry. **Do not rinse.**
- If clothes are heavily soiled with stool, rinse stool off or dispose of it in the toilet. Then, wash items separately from other household laundry on hot water cycle with soap. Dry items in a dryer if possible.
- Wash dishes and cutlery as usual.
- If you have a medical appointment, tell your healthcare providers that you have *C. diff*. Notifying them helps prevent the spread to others.
- You should **not** take any medications that will stop your diarrhea (example: Immodium®)

If I have *C. diff*, is my family at risk?

Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are not likely to catch *C. diff* if they wash their hands well. By taking precautions to prevent the spread of *C. diff* there is low risk to your family.

