

What is *Clostridium difficile* infection?

Clostridium difficile is a bacteria that may cause diarrhoea following antibiotic use. Normally it can be found in the bowel (large intestine) in approximately 2% of adults and is usually kept in check by the normal 'good' bacteria in the bowel. *Clostridium difficile* can also form spores, which allows it to survive in the environment.

What are the symptoms?

People may not have any symptoms but the infection may cause:

- Diarrhoea
- Fever
- Low abdominal cramps
- Nausea.
- Loss of appetite

How is *Clostridium difficile* infection spread?

People may become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated by the bacterium and then touch their mouth or mucus membranes

Who is most at risk of developing *Clostridium difficile* infection?

Patients who are taking antibiotics, which may have an effect on the bowel's 'good' bacteria, are more likely to develop *Clostridium difficile* infection.

Other risk factors can include:

- Advanced age
- Severe underlying illness
- Patients who have a feeding tube
- Longer hospital stay

How is *Clostridium difficile* (associated disease) diagnosed?

A test is carried out in the Microbiology Laboratory to detect the presence of a toxin that causes diarrhoea.

How is *Clostridium difficile* treated?

Most patients who develop a mild illness will improve once they stop taking the antibiotics (as directed by your doctor). Other times an antibiotic e.g. metronidazole or vancomycin, which can be taken orally is prescribed by your doctor.

What will happen to you if you are diagnosed with *Clostridium difficile* infection while in hospital?

Because the infection can be spread to another patient, symptomatic patients will be placed in a side room with ensuite facilities if possible or else cohorted (placed in an area with similar patients)

- All health care workers entering and exiting your room will **wash their hands with soap and water** and wear an apron.
- All visitors must wash their hands with soap and water and wear an apron
- If a commode or bedpan is used by you it will be removed after each use, the bedpan will be placed into a bedpan washer and commode cleaned and disinfected.
- You must wash your hands each time after using the toilet/commode.
- Your room will be cleaned as per ward schedule.

If you would like more information or have any questions about *Clostridium difficile* a member of the Infection Control Team would be happy to speak to you. The ward staff will contact a member of the team on your behalf.



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***Clostridium difficile* Infection**

**PATIENT/VISITOR
INFORMATION LEAFLET**

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Adapted from HPSC fact sheet

