

Clostridium difficile (*C. diff*)

What is *C. diff*?

- *C. diff* is a bacterium that produces a toxin and causes inflammation of the colon or colitis.
- The elderly or people with medical conditions may get it when taking antibiotics for other illnesses.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms include watery diarrhea (at least 3 per day for 2 or more days), fever, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, and tenderness.

How does *C. diff* spread?

- *C. diff* is in infected person's stool and can live for a long time on contaminated surfaces.
- Person-to-person: In healthcare settings, when infected healthcare workers and visitors' do not wash their hands correctly or often enough.
- Surface-to person: Any surface, device, object, or material (e.g., counters, knobs, or remote controls) contaminated with infected stool not visible to the eye.

Can *C. diff* be treated?

- Symptoms may stop within 2-3 days of stopping antibiotics used for the other illness.
- Your healthcare provider can prescribe a different antibiotic.
- In severe cases, the patient may need surgery to remove infected area of intestines.

How do I stop the spread?

- All healthcare providers should wash their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after each patient. If you do not see your provider clean their hands, ask them to do so.
- Clean all healthcare surfaces, like hospital rooms and medical equipment, with a 1:10 bleach-to-water solution.
- Healthcare providers should use Contact Precautions with *C. diff* patients by:
 - Providing a single-bed or private hospital room when possible
 - Using gloves, wearing a gown, and asking visitors to use gloves and gowns
 - Throwing gloves and gowns away when leaving each hospital room
 - Asking the patient to stay in their hospital room
 - Giving antibiotics only when necessary
- When discharged from hospital:
 - Take medicines prescribed exactly as your provider tells you
 - Wash your hands (running water and soap for 20 seconds) often, especially after the bathroom and before preparing food. Also, ask family to wash their hands often.
 - Call doctor immediately, if you develop symptoms.

Where can I find more information?

Go to cdc.gov and type *C. diff* in SEARCH box.



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