

## Preventing the spread of *C. difficile* in the home.

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It is uncommon for healthy people who are not taking antibiotics to get *C. difficile* disease. However, *C. difficile* can still spread to others. To help to stop the spread, it is important that hands are washed with soap and water after going to the toilet and before eating. Daily cleaning of bathrooms and kitchen areas with a bleach solution may also help to prevent the spread of *C. difficile*. The bleach solution should include 1 part bleach to every 10 parts of water, and be used to clean the surfaces in kitchens (countertops, cutting boards) and bathrooms (toilet seats, toilet bowl, flush button, washbasin taps). If possible, the affected person should use a separate toilet to the rest of the family. This toilet must be cleaned with bleach solution after each use.

## Symptoms to be concerned about during or after treatment for *C. difficile* disease?

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Medical advice should be sought immediately if fever, chills, vomiting, abdominal pain, diarrhoea, or any other concerning symptoms present.

A guide for patients, their friends and family members.

If you have any further questions, please talk to a doctor or nurse.

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1ST EDITION

## REFERENCES

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1. Centre for Disease Control (CDC)  
Department of Health & Human Services U.S.A Brochure  
Understanding Clostridium difficile

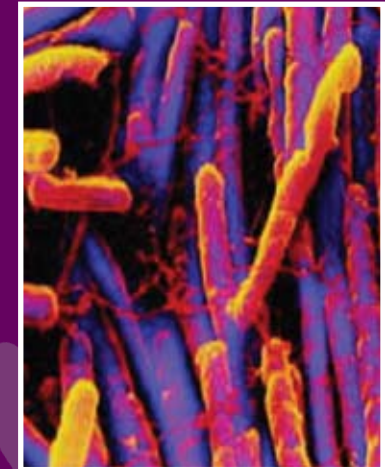
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UNDERSTANDING

# CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE

(*C. difficile*)



**RICPRAC**  
RURAL INFECTION CONTROL  
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## What is Clostridium difficile (C. difficile)?

C. difficile is a bacterium (germ) that is normally found in soil and other natural environments, it may also be found in our intestines. It is important to note that C. difficile bacteria produce spores which are capable of surviving on surfaces for months. If present, C. difficile may cause mild to moderate diarrhoea. However, it may sometimes cause colitis, a more serious infection of the intestines (colon).

## So, just how does C. difficile cause disease?

C. difficile bacteria can be found in the intestines of healthy people. It is usually kept in check by other bacteria which live in the intestines. These bacteria known as 'normal flora' or 'good bacteria' are beneficial to our digestive system- helping our body break down certain foods. When someone is on antibiotic treatment, these good bacteria may be affected and die. If this occurs, the balance of good and bad bacteria in our intestines may be altered. Some of the bad bacteria- C. difficile, may multiply and may produce toxins that cause diarrhoea or inflammation of the intestines

## What are the symptoms of C. difficile?

The most common symptom of C. difficile disease is watery diarrhoea, consisting of 3 or more bowel movements per day for 2 or more days. Other common symptoms include fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal cramping or tenderness



## Who is at risk of developing C. difficile disease?

Antibiotic use is the most common risk factor for developing C. difficile disease. Other important risk factors include hospitalization, a stay in a nursing home, advanced age, a serious underlying illness, a weakened immune system, or gastrointestinal surgery.

## How is C. difficile disease treated?

If you develop C. difficile disease as a result of antibiotic use, your doctor may advise you to stop taking antibiotics if possible. In addition, your doctor may prescribe other medications to treat your C. difficile disease. In very serious cases, intravenous medications or surgery may be required.



## How is C. difficile spread?

C. difficile is found in faeces and has the ability to form spores. C. difficile bacteria produce spores which are capable of surviving on surfaces for months. People may become infected when they touch items that are contaminated with faeces and then touch their mouth, eyes and/or nose. In a hospital, C. difficile can also be spread between patients on the hands of healthcare workers, equipment, etc.

In the hospital, C. difficile spores can be transferred to anyone who comes into contact with contaminated items (which may include bedrails, commodes) or shared medical equipment (such as blood pressure cuffs, electronic thermometers, etc.). If the spores are ingested (swallowed), C. difficile may cause disease.



## How are patients with C. difficile managed in hospital?

It has been proven for anyone who is admitted to hospital with diarrhoea or who develops diarrhoea while they are in hospital to be placed in isolation or (if this is not possible due to the limited availability of single rooms) to share a room with someone with the same infection. A sign will be placed outside the room and staff may wear gowns while caring for you. Gowns are worn to help prevent spread of infection of CDT. Gloves will also be worn when staff handle any body fluids. A faecal sample will be obtained to confirm the cause of the diarrhoea. These measures are an important safety precaution to help to prevent the spread of the disease.

## Are all cases of diarrhoea caused by C. difficile?

No, diarrhoea is a symptom and may have many different causes ie. Bowel disease, other bacteria, parasites, viruses and medications.

## Can patients with C. difficile have visitors while in hospital and in isolation?

Yes, family and friends can visit while patients are in isolation. It is important, however, that they wash their hands before and after entering the room.

Hospital's encourage all visitors to clean their hands with Alcohol Based Handrub before and after they enter the hospital.

