

You can get further advice and information by:

- Asking your Doctor or Healthcare Professional

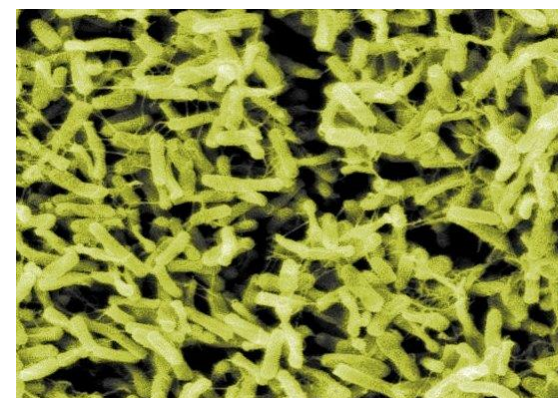
Other sources of information about health and health care:

- **Public Health England** works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices.
Website: www.gov.uk/phe
- **NHS Choices** is the online 'front door' to the NHS. It is the country's biggest health website and gives all the information you need to make choices about your health.
Website: www.nhs.uk

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Infection Prevention and Control

Clostridioides difficile (*Clostridium difficile*)



Magnified view of *Clostridium difficile* germ

Information Leaflet



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What is *Clostridioides difficile*?

It is a bacterium (germ) found in the large bowel that may produce toxins which can irritate and cause inflammation of the lining of the bowel.

What effect does this have?

The inflammation can cause explosive, offensive and watery diarrhoea. Some people also experience nausea, stomach ache, fever and loss of appetite.

How is it diagnosed?

A sample of liquid faeces is tested for the presence of the *Clostridioides difficile* toxins

Who is at risk of this infection?

Those who have been treated with antibiotics are at greatest risk of *Clostridioides difficile* infection. Most of those affected are the elderly with an underlying illness. Other people who may be at risk are those who have had hospital admissions, those whose immune system is affected by illness and/or treatment.

How do I get it?

Although some people can be healthy carriers of *Clostridioides difficile*, in most cases the infection develops after cross infection from another patient, either through direct patient to patient contact, via healthcare staff, or via a contaminated environment. A patient who has *Clostridioides difficile* diarrhoea excretes large numbers of the spores in their liquid faeces. These can contaminate the general environment around the patient's bed (including surfaces, keypads, equipment), toilet areas, commodes, etc. The spores can survive for a long time and be a source of hand-to-mouth infection for others.

How do we reduce the risk of *Clostridioides difficile* spreading in hospital?

- If you have symptoms (diarrhoea) you will be placed in a single room, where possible, or have designated toilet facilities
- You will need to take special care with hand washing. Wash hands with soap and water after toileting, before eating, taking medication and every time you leave the room
- It is also important that all staff and visitors wash their hands with soap and water when they enter or leave your room.

- Staff will wear protective equipment appropriate to the task when they come in to care for you or handle items in your room. Items in your room will either stay with you or be cleaned when they are removed from your room

What else can be done to help?

The doctors will review all medications including any antibiotics you are taking.

You need to ensure that you drink plenty of fluids e.g. tea, water, to prevent dehydration from the diarrhoea.

Your bowel movements will be monitored and recorded so that the nurses can assess you and the severity of your symptoms.

The nursing team will help you cope with the diarrhoea and ensure that the environment is kept clean. If you have any concerns, please ask the medical and nursing teams looking after you.

Can I give *Clostridioides difficile* to my family and friends?

Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk of getting this germ. Their best protection against even a small risk is to wash their hands after visiting you and follow the precautions as outlined above.

Will I be treated?

Mild diarrhoea may resolve once the antibiotics that caused the symptoms are stopped. More serious diarrhoea can last longer without treatment. If you need to be treated, your doctor will prescribe the correct medication.

Additional Information

Clostridioides difficile infections can recur days or even weeks later. It is important that if your symptoms return or persist you seek medical advice without delay.

Care should be taken if you need antibiotics in the future as this may trigger a return of symptoms.