



Leeds Community  
Healthcare  
NHS Trust

# Clostridium difficile

Please show this card to your healthcare provider

This person tested C. diff positive on: \_\_\_\_\_

Toxin positive/ negative

Clostridium difficile (C. diff) is a spore forming bacteria that may live in the large bowel. C. diff can be found in a small amount of peoples gut as part of their normal bowel flora and does not cause them any harm.

C. diff is diagnosed when a stool sample is taken following symptom diagnosis. This sample is tested in the laboratory.

## Results

There are two types of C. diff – toxin negative and toxin positive. If you have a toxin positive result it means that the C. diff in your bowel is most likely causing the diarrhoea and other symptoms you are experiencing.

If the result is C. diff toxin negative it means you have C. diff in your bowel but it is probably not causing you any problems at the moment and you do not need treatment. However you should be aware that you may pass the bug on to others or become symptomatic yourself.

## Symptoms

C. diff symptoms are caused by the bacteria multiplying and causing irritation to the bowel. This is sometimes a result of being given antibiotics, which disrupt the normal bowel flora.

C. diff symptoms include:

- Diarrhoea
- Blood or mucus present in stools
- Stomach pains, aches or cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Feeling sick

## Treatment

Your GP may give you a course of antibiotics to treat the C. diff infection. **You must ensure you complete the full course of any antibiotics you are given.** Any other antibiotics that you are currently taking may be stopped or changed to ones which are more effective against the bacteria.

If you have no ongoing diarrhoea symptoms you may not need antibiotics.

Diarrhoea can also cause dehydration. You should drink plenty of fluids to avoid becoming dehydrated.

## Advice

To stop the spread of C. diff and to reduce the chances of the infection being passed to others, you must wash your hands with liquid soap and water after going to the toilet, and before and after preparing or eating food. Washing bed linen and clothing separately to the rest of your family and not sharing items such as toothbrushes, towels and face cloths will also help.

C. diff spores can live for a long time on hard surfaces so it is important that you clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles and light switches regularly with a bleach-based solution, vacuum the carpets daily and empty your vacuum more often.

## Advice for Healthcare Professionals

C. difficile is a highly infectious spore forming bacteria. Strict standard infection prevention and control (IPC) precautions **must** be used when caring for a C. diff patient to reduce the risk of spread. Hand hygiene must be conducted with liquid soap, water and paper towels. Please note alcohol gel is ineffective against C. diff spores.

If a C. diff positive patient requires admission to hospital or any other healthcare setting it is **your** responsibility to communicate the patient's C. diff status, and complete a HCAI transfer form, enabling the receiving unit to instigate IPC practices promptly.

Please refer to the LCH C. diff policy (found on ELSIE) or Leeds Health Pathways for further information.

## Prescribing Advice for Healthcare Professionals

Full prescribing advice for the treatment of C. diff can be found on Leeds Health Pathways. Please consult a microbiologist if you have any prescribing queries.

Patients who have, or previously had, a C. diff infection are susceptible to relapse and so antibiotic prescribing should be considered carefully.

Antibiotics (especially broad spectrum) can alter the bacterial balance within the gut and create an environment in which C. diff can thrive and produce symptom causing toxins. Antibiotics should only be prescribed when absolutely essential.

## Useful Information

Useful websites for general C. diff information:

NHS Choices [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

NHS 111 (for urgent medical help that is NOT a 999 emergency)

Public Health England [www.phe.gov.uk](http://www.phe.gov.uk)

Handwashing tips and techniques:

National Patient Safety Agency:

[www.npsanhs.uk/cleanyourhands](http://www.npsanhs.uk/cleanyourhands)

Department of Health: [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

If you have a complaint, comment, concern or compliment please speak to a member of our staff or contact PALS on 0113 2208585 (Mon – Fri, 9.30 – 17.00) or email [lch.pals@nhs.net](mailto:lch.pals@nhs.net)

## Support

If you would like further advice about C. diff or have any questions please contact your GP or the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 0113 8434511 (Mon – Fri, 8.30 – 17.00).

**Remember even if you have completed your antibiotics, you may become unwell again if the infection comes back.**

If your symptoms return, or if they persist, please contact your GP as you may need further treatment or tests.