

## Other useful information sources

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)

National Patient Safety Agency - [www.npsa.nhs.uk/cleanyourhands](http://www.npsa.nhs.uk/cleanyourhands)

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

## Help us get it right

If you have a complaint, concern, comment or compliment, please let us know by speaking to a member of staff. We learn from your feedback and use the information you provide to improve and develop our services.

If you would like to talk to someone outside the service contact the **Patient Experience Team** on **0113 220 8585**, Monday to Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm or email [lch.pet@nhs.net](mailto:lch.pet@nhs.net)

## Contact us

### Infection Prevention and Control

Chapelton Health Centre

Spencer Place

Chapeltowl

Leeds LS7 4BB

Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5pm

Tel: 0113 8434511

[www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk](http://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk)

# CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE

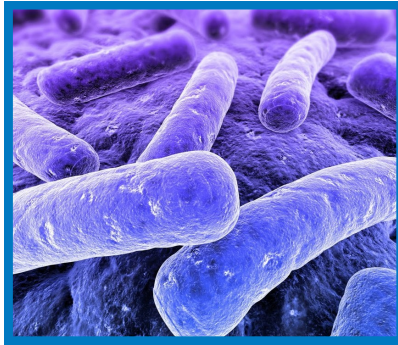
“C. diff”



## Information for Patients

## What is C. diff?

Clostridium Difficile (C. diff) is a spore forming bacteria that can live in your gut as part of its normal flora. Lots of different bacteria live naturally in the gut. In about 3% of healthy adults the gut's normal flora includes C.diff which rarely causes any problems in healthy people. 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.

## How do people get C. diff infections?

C. diff only causes a problem when something alters the natural balance of bacteria in the gut causing the body's defenses to become weakened. This then allows C. diff bacteria to increase causing infection.

## Who is at risk of developing C. diff?

- Anyone taking antibiotics
- Anyone taking PPI's (stomach acid lowering drugs such as lansoprazole and omeprazole)
- People who have been admitted to hospital
- People over 65 years old
- Immunocompromised people
- Those who have had recent abdominal/ bowel surgery
- People with underlying inflammatory bowel conditions such as Crohn's, ulcerative colitis

## How is C. diff spread?

C. diff can be spread by direct contact with an infected person, or by touching a surface that has the C. diff spores on it. A person with C. diff infection releases spores into the environment when they go to the toilet. C. diff can live for months on surfaces and are then picked up on the hands and transferred to other surfaces or people, causing the infection to spread.

This is why it is so important to thoroughly wash your hands with liquid soap and water, especially after going to the toilet and before preparing or eating food.

**Do NOT use alcohol gel or hand rub as it does not remove the C. diff bacteria. Only washing your hands with liquid soap and water will remove the bacteria.**

## What are the symptoms of C. diff?

C. diff symptoms are caused by the bacteria multiplying and causing irritation to the bowel. Symptoms can include:

- Diarrhoea – which can sometimes be quite severe with a quick on-set time.
- Bloody diarrhoea or mucus in your stools
- Stomach pains, ache or cramps
- Loss of appetite
- Fever



## How is C. diff diagnosed?

Your GP (or another health professional) will have taken a stool (poo) sample which will be tested for the C. diff bacteria.

## What should I do if I have C. diff?

- People who have C. diff symptoms can live at home as usual but need to take extra care to reduce the effects of their illness and ensure they do not pass the bacteria onto anyone else. If you have these symptoms you should:
- Avoid unnecessary close contact with other people until you have been symptom free for 48 hours.
- Use bleach-based products to clean hard surfaces in kitchens and bathrooms (don't forget door handles and tap tops).
- Make sure you wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water – especially after going to the toilet and before preparing/ eating food.
- Ask your guests to wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water before leaving your home.
- Wash clothing and bedding from an infected person separately and on the highest temperature possible (according to manufacturer's guidance) and separately to the rest of the family.
- Ensure items such as face cloths, towels and toothbrushes are not shared.
- Always carry your C. diff card and show it to any doctors, nurses, carers, pharmacists, dentists and other healthcare professionals involved in your care.

**Remember: Do NOT take medicines to stop diarrhoea. These medicines stop the bacteria being cleared from your body.**

## How is C. diff treated?

You may be given an antibiotic that treats the C. diff infection. Any other antibiotics that you are on may be stopped or changed to an antibiotic which is effective against the bacteria. Diarrhoea can also cause dehydration. It is very important to try and avoid becoming dehydrated so you need to drink plenty of fluids.

## What to do if your symptoms come back?

Sometimes people who have recently had a C. diff infection can become ill again. So it's really important to know what the symptoms are in case the infection comes back.

If your symptoms come back, speak to your GP for advice. You should also take care to wash your hands properly and increase your household cleaning using bleach-based products. Bleach-based products will kill the C. diff spores in your home.

## Who should you contact for more advice and support?

Anybody who has been diagnosed with C. diff, and is currently living at home, will be given antibiotics to treat the infection by their GP.

They will also be contacted by the Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Team who will provide advice and offer the opportunity for any questions to be asked.

The IPC Team may visit you at home or contact you via telephone.

Along with this leaflet you will be provided with a C. diff card.

The C. diff positive card is there to let other healthcare professionals know that you have a C. diff infection or you are at risk of getting ill from it in the near future. This information is really important because it can help them to decide what medicines you should have and which ones to avoid. You can show this card to any healthcare professionals involved in your care, including doctors, nurses, carers, pharmacists, dentists and many others.

**Even if you don't have the symptoms at the moment, you may be at risk of getting ill from the infection if it comes back.**

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

## What if I have a healthcare appointment?

If you have symptoms and you are due to have an outpatient appointment, health test or operation ring the hospital or your GP. They will be able to tell you whether your treatment can go ahead or if your appointment needs to be rearranged.

## What can I do about C. diff if I am a community in-patient?

If you are a community in-patient and have a C. diff infection you may be moved to a single occupancy room to reduce the risk of spread to others. To help staff you should:

- Let staff know if you have diarrhoea so they can identify a toilet for you to use
- Always wash your hands after using the toilet
- Let staff know if the toilet is dirty
- Keep your hands and body clean
- Keep your bed and locker clean and free from clutter so it can be cleaned easily
- Cover food and sweets you may have at your bedside. Do not share them
- Always ask staff to wash their hands before and after they touch you
- Always wash your hands, or clean them with a wipe, before and after a meal
- Ask your visitors to wash their hands with soap and water before and after visiting

As soon as you are well enough, you will be able to go home. Having C. diff should not stop this.

## Diet

Having diarrhoea can often make people feel unwell, bloated and sick. Many people feel like they don't want to eat or are afraid to eat as it makes their diarrhoea worse. It is very important to ensure you still eat whilst you have diarrhoea. It is also very important that you drink plenty of fluids as diarrhoea can make you dehydrated quickly.

## What should I eat?

While you have C. diff symptoms it is best to eat plain, simple and soft foods such as:

- White bread and toast
- Digestive, rich tea or other plain biscuits
- Potatoes
- White fish
- Rice and pasta
- Root vegetables
- Soup

Eating "little and often" is sometimes more manageable than being over faced by a large meal such as lunch or dinner. There is no need to stop nutritional supplements such as build-up drinks if you have diarrhoea.



**If you are prescribed antibiotics ALWAYS take the full course. If you get diarrhoea (or any other side effects) contact your doctor immediately.**

## What should I drink?

Drinking plenty can prevent dehydration as diarrhoea causes the body to lose a lot of water. Drinks such as:

- Water
- Squash
- Fruit Juice diluted with water, lemonade or soda
- Fruit tea
- Decaffeinated Coffee

are all suitable and will help rehydrate the body. In some cases your GP or healthcare professional may prescribe you a rehydration solution which contains all the electrolytes your body needs to function, but will have been lost due to your diarrhoea. As with food, drinking small, frequent sips of fluid is sometimes more manageable than a whole glass at once.

## What should I avoid eating and drinking?

Whilst you have C. diff symptoms, you should avoid eating and drinking foods that are difficult to digest or may irritate your stomach. Spicy curries, greasy foods and alcohol should be avoided.

Wholegrain products (such as brown bread and fibre rich cereals, fruit, vegetables and pulses) are also best avoided as they promote digestion.

## Can C. diff affect my family and friends?

C. diff is infectious and can be harmful to some people such as those with serious health problems, the immunocompromised, and the elderly. C. diff should not harm healthy people including pregnant women, children or babies however to ensure your family and friends remain well it is best for them to:

- Wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water before leaving your home, after using the toilet and after contact with you.
- Wash their laundry separately to yours
- Not share towels, toothbrushes, and face cloths with you

## Household practices

Whilst you have C. diff symptoms, it is important that you maintain a clean home environment. To reduce the spread of bacteria and help prevent your relatives from becoming infected, you should:

- Practice good hand hygiene at all times, especially after going to the toilet and before preparing/ eating meals.
- Wash your clothing and bed linen separately to the rest of the family. Your clothing and bed linen should be washed on the highest temperature possible (as per manufacturer's guidance).
- Not share items such as face cloths, toothbrushes and towels with other visitors and family members.
- Thoroughly clean your kitchen work surfaces, where food is prepared, with a bleach-based solution before and after food preparation.
- Thoroughly clean the frequently touched areas of your bathroom (tap tops, door handles, toilet seats and flushers) with a bleach-based solution.
- Thoroughly clean the frequently touched areas of your household (door handles, telephones, bedside and coffee tables) with a bleach-based household cleaning solution.
- Vacuum carpets daily and empty the bag/ container more frequently than usual.
- If your floors or household surfaces become soiled with faeces it is important that you:
  - Clean them immediately using a disposable cloth and warm soapy water and then a bleach-based solution. **Do NOT use bleach on carpeted or fabric areas.**
  - Wear disposable gloves when cleaning the area.
  - Dispose of all cleaning cloths, towels etc. immediately after use.

