

If, after reading this leaflet you have any further questions, please contact your doctor or discharge ward on:

Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road,
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR
Telephone: 0151 290 4105



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Clostridioides (Clostridium) Difficile Infection

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Clostridioides Difficile Infection

This leaflet aims to answer any queries you might have about your illness.

What is clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides difficile (formerly known as **Clostridium difficile**) is one of the bacteria (germs) that are normally found in small numbers in the bowel of up to 5% of healthy adults.

It is more common in babies: 50-70% of healthy babies may have C difficile in their gut.

After taking antibiotics, the normal balance of bacteria in the gut is disturbed and C difficile can flourish and cause symptoms e.g. diarrhoea.

People over 65 years are more susceptible to developing infection after taking antibiotics.

C difficile bacteria are everywhere: in soil, air, water, human and animal faeces, meat from the supermarket etc.

The bacteria do not create problems until they grow in abnormally large numbers in the gut of people taking antibiotics or other antimicrobial drugs.

C difficile is not confined exclusively to hospitals.

It can also be a problem in people on antibiotics who have never been in hospital.

Additional information

If you have any worries, or would like more information ask your named nurse to contact a member of the Infection Prevention Team, who will be happy to have a chat with you.

You can get also get more information at <https://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

Is there a risk to visitors?

C difficile does not generally cause problems in people who are not on antibiotics. Therefore health care workers and visitors are at almost no risk of catching the illness.

However if any of these people are receiving antibiotics there could be some risk of infection and they should pay special attention to their hand washing.

If you have been diagnosed with C difficile infection, please let any healthcare professional looking after you in the future know about this so that they can care for you appropriately.

Who is at risk?

Risk factors for C difficile infection include:

- Treatment with antibiotics which destroy the protective gut bacteria
- Treatment with proton pump inhibitors e.g. omeprazole, lansoprazole which reduce the protective acids in the stomach
- Age: those over 65 years are at greatest risk
- People with serious underlying illnesses or weakened immunity

Symptoms of infection

These may include:

- Watery, foul-smelling diarrhoea
- Abdominal pain
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea

Severity can vary. Some people have no symptoms at all, others are very ill. About one in five people get better then the diarrhoea starts up again. This is because C difficile spores are often resistant to treatment with antibiotics and are difficult to destroy. A second course of treatment will be given.

Diagnosis of infection

Diarrhoea is a common side effect of antibiotics and is not always due to C difficile. If C difficile infection is suspected, a specimen of faeces will be sent to the laboratory for testing.

How is it treated?

- You will need to have extra fluids to restore the water lost in diarrhoea. You may be able to take this by mouth or you may need to have a drip put into a vein
- Your doctor will review any antibiotics you are on. You may need to stop taking the antibiotics that predisposed you to C difficile diarrhoea, providing the original infection has been treated adequately
- Metronidazole alone or with vancomycin may be used to treat the C difficile

Preventing the spread of infection

How is the spread of C difficile controlled?

Hand-washing

The most effective way to prevent the bacteria from spreading is by hand washing and that includes staff thoroughly washing their hands with soap and water before and after contact with the patient. Sanitising is less effective than hand-washing against C difficile.

It is therefore very important to wash your hands thoroughly after using the toilet or commode and before you eat.

Isolation

Because the bacteria may form spores, it can survive for long periods of time in the environment - for example on floors and around toilets. Infected patients are therefore segregated from non-infected patients, usually in a single room. Staff will wear disposable gloves and aprons when caring for infected patients.

Should you be re-admitted to hospital you will be nursed in a side room in case you develop further episodes of diarrhoea whilst you are an in patient.

Cleaning

Rigorous cleaning with chlorine disinfectant is used to remove C difficile from the environment.

Discharge from hospital

If you have not got diarrhoea there is no reason why you should not lead a normal life. It is safe for you to have the usual social contact with any adult or child.

Sometimes there is a flare up of the diarrhoea after patients are discharged from hospital. If this happens to you, contact [Community Infection Prevention Teams](#) -

Knowsley residents: 0151 676 5439

St Helens, Halton & Warrington residents: 01744 457312

Other areas and out of hours contact your Doctor and show this leaflet