

## Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI, C. diff)

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### *What is Clostridium difficile?*

C. diff is one of the many types of bacteria that can be found in intestines/feces (bowel movement). C. diff can sometimes occur when antibiotics kill your usual bowel bacteria and allow the C. diff to grow. When C. diff grows in the bowel, it produces toxins. These toxins can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. In severe cases, surgery may be needed, and in extreme cases CDI may cause death. CDI is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospitals and long-term care homes.

### *How is C. diff spread?*

CDI usually occurs during or after the use of antibiotics. Advanced age, presence of other serious illness and poor overall health may increase the risk of severe disease. When a person has CDI, the bacteria in the stool can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, handles, bedpans, or commode chairs. When touching these items our hands can become contaminated. If we then touch our mouth without washing our hands, we can become infected. Our soiled hands can also spread the bacteria to other surfaces or food we eat.

By washing your hands and practicing good hygiene, you can greatly reduce your chances of picking up **any** bacteria – not just C. diff.

### *Signs and Symptoms:*

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Loss of appetite

### *How is CDI prevented?*

Our goal is to identify patients with CDI quickly and institute infection control measures accordingly thereby preventing potential transmission. If you are in the hospital and have C. diff, you will be placed on Contact Precautions and moved to a private room. Your activities outside the room may be restricted. All health care staff who enter your room will wear a gown and gloves. Everyone **MUST** clean their hands when leaving your room.

Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before eating. Cleaning our hands is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of C. difficile and other germs. As well, a thorough bleach cleaning of your room and equipment will be done to prevent spread of the infection.

### **Remember!**

Good hand hygiene is the most important infection control practice to prevent and control the spread of microorganisms (bacteria, viruses).

Remind all staff and visitors to clean their hands before and after they touch you.

### ***How is C. diff managed in the hospital?***

When a patient is diagnosed with C. diff, they are placed on contact precautions and transferred into a private room. While on precautions patients are asked not to leave their rooms and to perform regular hand hygiene.

### ***What do I need to do at home?***

Healthy people like your family and friends who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk for getting CDI.

#### **1. Cleaning the house**

- Use an all-purpose household cleaner or diluted household bleach.
- Follow the directions on the label, and:
  - Wipe surfaces starting from the cleanest areas and moving towards the dirtiest areas.
  - Wet the surface well and clean using good friction.
  - Allow the surface to air dry.
- Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with feces such as the toilet and sink.
- Remove any visible feces and then clean as described above.

#### **2. Cleaning clothes/other fabric**

- Wash clothes/fabric separately if they are heavily soiled with feces:
  - Rinse off feces.
  - Clean in a hot water cycle with soap.
  - Dry items in the dryer on high heat, if possible.
  - Dry clean where appropriate.

#### **3. Cleaning dishes**

- Regular cleaning – use the dishwasher or clean by hand with soap and water.

#### **4. Hand Hygiene**

- Practicing good hand hygiene is just as important at home as it is in the healthcare setting.
- Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds with soap and water:
  - After using the toilet.
  - After touching dirty surfaces.
  - Before eating.
  - Before preparing meals.

#### **Reference:**

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/cdi/about.aspx#2>

[http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PIDAC-IPC Annex C Testing SurveillanceManage C difficile 2013.pdf](http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PIDAC-IPC%20Annex%20C%20Testing%20SurveillanceManage%20C%20difficile%202013.pdf)

<https://www.york.ca/media/121896/download?attachment?attachment>