

Clostridioides Difficile

You can help stop the spread of C. diff infection by keeping your hands clean.

Clostridioides difficile, also known as *C. diff*, is a bacteria in your bowels. Small amounts may be normal. Large amounts may lead to infection.

C. diff infection

Some types of *C. diff* produce toxins (harmful substances). These toxins can:

- Irritate your bowel
- Cause diarrhea
- Lead to infection

In some cases, certain antibiotics may decrease the amount of normal bacteria in your bowel. This may then cause the amount of *C. diff* to increase, raising your risk of infection.

Most cases of *C. diff* infection happen in patients taking antibiotics. You are also at risk for *C. diff* infection if you:

- Are a patient in the hospital
- Live in a nursing home
- Are an older adult
- Have a weakened immune system from diseases such as cancer or human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infection
- Had bowel surgery

How C. diff spreads

C. diff can live outside of the body for a very long time. It can be spread by touching contaminated surfaces such as medical equipment, bed rails, bed linens and bathroom fixtures.

C. diff can also be spread on the contaminated gloved or ungloved hands of nurses, physicians, other healthcare workers and visitors.

Hand-washing can help stop the spread of *C. diff*.

C. diff infection symptoms

The most common symptom of *C. diff* infection is 3 or more episodes of diarrhea in 24 hours. You may also have a fever, loss of appetite, nausea and stomach cramping. If your care team thinks you have *C. diff* infection, they will send a sample of your stool for testing.

Treatment of *C. diff* infection

If you are taking antibiotics, your physician may stop them. They may prescribe other types of antibiotics that target *C. diff*. They may give you the antibiotics either by mouth or IV (intravenously, or into the vein).

Special precautions for the hospital staff

Your caregivers will follow “Contact Plus” precautions. This means all hospital staff and visitors will wear gowns and gloves when they come into your room. (You may leave your door open.) Hospital cleaning staff will clean your room every day using a disinfectant cleaner with bleach. These steps help prevent *C. diff* from spreading.

Hospital staff and visitors will follow Contact Plus precautions until you no longer have diarrhea.

Visitor guidelines

You may have visitors. Visitors should go to the nurses’ station before going into your room. The nurse will tell them what to do to enter your room. Visitors are not likely to get *C. diff* from you, but they should take these precautions:

- Clean their hands before they enter and when they leave your room.
- Wear isolation gowns and gloves when going into your room.

Care at home

Although most healthy people are not at risk for getting sick from *C. diff*, it is important to know that taking an antibiotic increases your risk of getting *C. diff*. You can help prevent the spread of *C. diff* in your home by following these instructions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water.
- Always wash your hands after using the bathroom and before eating and cooking food.
- Make sure people who live with you clean their hands often.

If your physician prescribes medications to treat your *C. diff* infection, be sure to take them as directed.

If your diarrhea gets worse or comes back after your treatment, call your physician right away.