



**Countess of
Chester Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

Clostridium Difficile

Information for patients, staff
and relatives





What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (C.diff) is a bacterium (germ) that can live in the gut of both children and adults and under normal circumstances, cause no problems.

It can grow rapidly in the intestines (bowel) when antibiotic therapy is given for other unrelated infections. The germ produces toxins which are released and can cause a wide range of symptoms:

- mild diarrhoea.
- serious diarrhoea with mucous and blood.
- abdominal pain.

C.diff infection often occurs following treatment with antibiotics. It usually affects elderly people and those with other serious health problems. Most cases occur during the first week of antibiotic therapy, but the onset may be delayed for as long as six weeks after the final dose. Sometimes the diarrhoea can begin after a single dose of antibiotics.

How do I find out if I have Clostridium difficile?

If you have diarrhoea for more than 24 hours we will take a stool specimen and send it to the laboratory for testing. The result should be available within 24 hours.

Can Clostridium difficile be treated?

C.diff diarrhoea is sometimes mild and stops on its own or when you have finished taking the antibiotics. In some cases, you might need to take another antibiotic for 7-10 days especially if you have severe diarrhoea. Diarrhoea usually begins to get better after 2-3 days of starting this antibiotic.

In some instances, the infection does not respond to the treatment so it is important to monitor whether your diarrhoea is improving or getting worse. If your diarrhoea does not start to get better, another type of antibiotic may be necessary.





It is also important to try to prevent any complications of diarrhoea. Complications can be:

- dehydration - so make sure that you drink plenty of water
- sore skin on your bottom - try to keep clean and change your clothing daily or as soon as it is soiled. Using wet wipes on your bottom after you have had diarrhoea can help prevent sore skin.

Please tell your doctor or nurse if you notice that your skin is becoming sore or you are unable to drink enough water.

How do you stop Clostridium difficile spreading?

The main ways to prevent C.diff from spreading are:

- caring for patients with C.diff diarrhoea in a side room, wherever possible
- staff using gloves and aprons when providing close personal care

- thorough cleaning and disinfection of the ward environment, toilet, commode and other equipment
- regular changing and washing of linen, clothing and towels
- individual toilet facilities or commode for anyone with diarrhoea
- thorough hand washing using soap and water especially after using the toilet; after helping someone else to use the toilet; before serving food or eating and after cleaning the environment.

What will happen to me if I get Clostridium difficile?

C.diff is found in high numbers in diarrhoea so if you have C.diff and diarrhoea, you will be nursed in a single room, wherever possible and you will have a toilet or a commode for your own use. This provides some privacy and helps prevent spread of infection to other vulnerable patients as well.





If no single room is available you may be nursed in a bay especially if you are mobile and are able to get to the toilet.

It is always important that you thoroughly wash your hands after using the toilet or before eating. Try to avoid putting your fingers in your mouth.

C.diff can also live in dust, bed sheets, and curtains and on surfaces, so the area you are in will be thoroughly cleaned every day with disinfectant. It is advisable to change your clothing daily sooner if they become soiled.

Staff will wear aprons and gloves to look after you and will always wash their hands after giving you care.

What about my personal laundry?

If you are suffering from C.diff infection, special laundry bags are available from the nurses for your relatives/carers to place directly in the washing machine at home.

Can people still visit me and can they catch Clostridium difficile?

C.diff does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. You can continue to have normal social contact such as shaking hands or kissing with your friends and family.

We ask that visitors who are unwell themselves stay away until they are better (e.g. if taking antibiotics, upset tummy, heavy cold, or chest infection). If you are in doubt please discuss it with the staff looking after you.

Visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons but they must use the hand hygiene rub before visiting anyone in hospital and wash their hands after. This protects patients and prevents the spread of infections to others.

If your visitors are going to see another patient on the same day, they should come to see you afterwards.





Can Clostridium difficile come back?

Yes. Further courses of antibiotics may cause symptoms to return. Sometimes it will be necessary to give a longer course of treatment.

How will I know when the Clostridium difficile is gone?

When the diarrhoea stops and your normal bowel habits return, we consider the infection has gone. There is no need to send a further specimen to check but you may still need to finish your course of antibiotics.

Can I go home with Clostridium difficile?

You would normally wait until the diarrhoea has settled and your medical team is satisfied that you are fit for discharge. They will let you know if you need to continue treatment at home.

Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

Please speak to any of the ward staff who are caring for you.

If your doctors and nurses are unable to answer your questions or if you require further information, the infection prevention and control nurses are available via switchboard at the Countess of Chester Hospital on 01244 365000.

Official Websites

The Association of Medical Microbiologists produce a leaflet 'The facts about Clostridium difficile infection' available on their website:

www.amm.co.uk/html/publications.htm

The Health Protection Agency in the UK:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england





If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on compact disk and in other languages on request. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:

Telephone: **01244 366066**

or email: **cochpals@nhs.net**

إذا ترغب في الحصول على النسخة باللغة العربية ، فضلاً اتصل بمركز معلومات المرضى أو تحدث مع أحد الموظفين

若是你想索取這份傳單的中文譯本，請聯絡「病人預約中心」或向其中一名職員查詢。

Si vous voulez cette brochure en français, contactez le bureau des rendez-vous ou demandez à un membre du personnel.

यदि आप यह परचा हिन्दी में लेना चाहते हैं तो कृपया पेशेन्ट अॅपाइन्टमेन्ट सेन्टर से संपर्क करे या किसी स्टाफ से पूछें।

Haddii aad jeclaan laheyd buug-yarahan oo af-Soomaali ku qoran la soo xiriir xarruunta bukaan ballaminta ama wax weydii xubin shaqaalaha ka tirsan.

Si desea recibir este folleto en español, sírvase contactar al Centro de Citas para Pacientes o solicitarlo al personal.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ اردو میں درکار ہے تو پشہنت اپوائنٹمنٹ سینٹر یا سٹلے کے کسی رکن سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Mae'r daflen hon ar gael (ar gais), mewn print bras, ar dâp sain neu ar ddisg, ac efallai mewn ieithoedd eraill ar gais. Cysylltwch â chanolfan apwyntiadau cleifion i ofyn am gopi.

**Countess of Chester Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust
Liverpool Road
Chester
CH2 1UL
www.coch.nhs.uk**

design by Medical Photography and Illustration COCH
WZZ5227nNov17pi

