

C. Diff (Clostridioides difficile)

What is clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides [klos-TRID-ee-OY-deez] **difficile** [dif-eh-seel] is the new name for **clostridium difficile** — often called “C. diff.” It is a germ (bacterium) that causes inflammation in the colon (lower intestine). The most common symptoms of a C. diff infection are:

- Watery diarrhea (poop)
- Fever
- Not feeling hungry
- Nausea (sick to your stomach)
- Belly pain and tenderness

Who is at risk to get C. diff?

You are more likely to get C. diff if you are:

- Taking antibiotics or have just finished taking them.
- Over age 65
- Have a weakened immune system. This means anyone with HIV or AIDS, cancer, or a recent organ transplant.
- Have had C. diff before

C. diff can live outside the human body for a long time. The germ spreads from person to person by sticking to things such as bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. This is why it's easy to get on the hands of doctors, nurses, other healthcare providers, or visitors. Hand washing can help prevent the spread.

How is C. diff treated?

C. diff can be treated with specific antibiotics. If the infection returns, there are other procedures that may be done to successfully treat C. diff. Your doctor will discuss these options with you if needed.

Preventing C. diff IN THE HOSPITAL



YOUR HEALTHCARE TEAM will do these things:

- **Put patients with C. diff in a private room.**
If a private room is unavailable, patients may share rooms with other people who have C. diff.
- **Clean their hands BEFORE** caring for a patient (with either soap and water OR hand sanitizer).
- **Clean their hands with ONLY soap and water after** caring for a patient (see page 2). Note that **hand sanitizer does NOT kill C. diff spores.**
- **Wear gloves and a gown** while caring for you, and remove them before leaving your room.
- **Clean all hospital rooms and medical equipment** carefully and often.
- **Give antibiotics only when necessary.**

YOU can do these things:

- **Make sure all healthcare providers use ONLY soap and water** to wash their hands after caring for you (see box on page 2). Hand sanitizer use is okay before someone comes in contact with C. diff spores.
- **Wash your own hands** with soap and water often, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.
- **Stay in your hospital room** as much as possible. Avoid common areas such as the gift shop or cafeteria. (You may go to other hospital areas for treatments or tests.)
- **Take your antibiotics exactly as prescribed by your doctor.**

Even if you are being treated for C. diff, the bacteria can still spread to other people.

Preventing C.diff AT HOME



Once you are home, you can return to your normal routine. Often the diarrhea will be better or completely gone before you go home. This makes giving C. diff to others much less likely.

Do these things to reduce the chance of getting C. diff again or spreading it to others:

- Take any medicine for C. diff exactly as prescribed by your doctor. Don't take half-doses, and don't stop before you complete your prescribed medicine.
- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food (see instructions at right). **Remember, hand sanitizers are not effective against C. diff.**
- Make sure people who live with you wash their hands often as well.

- Follow any other instructions your doctor gives you.

- Clean and sanitize your bathroom and high-touch surfaces like door knobs and countertops often.

When should I call my doctor?

Call your doctor if your diarrhea returns.

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Hand washing with soap and water

People can get C.diff if they touch surfaces that are contaminated with germs. Healthcare providers can spread the germs if they don't wash their hands often enough. If you don't see your healthcare team clean their hands, please ask them to do so. See the **5 steps to proper hand washing** below.

				
WET your hands under clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.	LATHER your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.	SCRUB your hands for at least 20 seconds.	RINSE your hands well, under clean running water.	DRY your hands with a clean towel, or air dry them.