



Clostridium *Difficile* – (C.diff)

What is Clostridium difficile (C. diff)?

C.diff is one of the many bacteria that can be found in feces (poop). C.diff infection happens when antibiotics kill your good gut bacteria and lets C.diff multiply. When it multiplies, the C.diff bacteria can make toxins that damage the gut and can cause diarrhea. C. diff is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospital and nursing homes.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptoms of C. diff are:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness

Who gets C. diff?

Some people are at a higher risk of getting C.diff, such as adults who are hospitalized for long periods, seniors, and those who use certain antibiotics or antacids. Other groups at risk include people with serious illnesses such as cancer or who have had surgery to the stomach or intestines. Healthy people including children are at very low risk of getting C. diff infection.

How is C.diff diagnosed?

If you have symptoms of C. diff, your health care provider will ask for a sample of your watery stool for testing.

What is the treatment for C.diff?

Treatment depends on how sick you are. C.diff infection is usually mild and may not need treatment. For more severe cases, antibiotics and possibly surgery may be needed.

How is it spread?

C. diff is mainly spread from feces of someone who is sick with C.diff. After a bowel movement, you may get C. diff on your hands. You can then pass it from your hands to anything you touch. A person can get C. diff if they touch something that happens to have the bacteria on it, and then touch their mouth. This is why hand washing is so important. C. diff can form spores that can live on objects for many months.

How do I protect myself and others?

You can help stop the spread of C. diff by washing your hands after using the toilet, before preparing foods and before eating. Rigorously washing your hands for 15 seconds with soap and water is best.

Are there any special concerns about C. diff?

If you are in the hospital or a nursing home and have C.diff diarrhea, you will be put on special precautions until you have had at least two days with no symptoms of diarrhea. Your activities outside the room may be restricted. All staff who enters your room should wear a gown and gloves. Everyone should clean their hands before putting on gloves before entering your room as well as after removing gloves when leaving your room.

What should I do at home?

- Wash your hands well and often.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and items using an all-purpose household cleaner following the directions on the label. Use friction while cleaning.
- It is important that you take all your medication as ordered by your health care provider. You should not use any over-the-counter medications that will stop your diarrhea (e.g., Imodium). If diarrhea persists or comes back, follow up with your health care provider.

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