

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

ABOUT

***CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE* DIARRHOEA**

If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as large print), please ask your nursing staff to arrange this or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses on the number provided on the back page of this leaflet.

This leaflet is for patients with *Clostridium difficile* diarrhoea. It attempts to answer frequently asked questions about the condition. If after reading this leaflet you are still unsure about the condition and what it means to you, please ask the nursing staff who will either answer your questions or ask an Infection Prevention and Control Nurse to come and talk to you.

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile (also known as *C difficile* or *C diff*) is a bacteria (germ) that can cause infection of the intestinal tract (bowel). The usual symptoms are diarrhoea, fever and abdominal pain (tummy ache). In some cases the diarrhoea may contain mucus (it may be slimy) or blood and may have a nasty smell.

How can I get *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile can be part of the normal bacteria that live in your bowel without causing you any harm. Taking certain antibiotics can change the normal balance of the bacteria which live in your bowel, making it easier for the *Clostridium difficile* to grow, multiply and cause an infection. People over 60 years old are more at risk of getting *Clostridium difficile*.

How do you know that I have got *Clostridium difficile*?

If you have got diarrhoea and have been taking antibiotics, a sample of your stool (faeces) will have been tested for *Clostridium difficile* in the laboratory. This test will show us if you have got *Clostridium difficile*.

Can it spread to other people?

It can be spread to other people who are on antibiotics or have difficulty in fighting infection if equipment such as toilet seats, commodes, staff and patients' hands and the general environment are not properly cleaned.

Every effort is made to prevent *Clostridium difficile* from spreading by encouraging hand hygiene, maintaining a high level of cleanliness in ward areas and being very strict about using certain antibiotics.

Are my visitors at risk of catching *Clostridium difficile*?

No, if they are healthy and not taking antibiotics, they are not at any increased risk of catching *Clostridium difficile*.

We recommend that your visitors wash their hands before leaving the ward as a precautionary measure.

What happens to me?

If you have diarrhoea you will be moved into a single room and your activities outside that room will be limited until you have been free of diarrhoea for 48 hours. If you have no diarrhoea it is not usually necessary for you to be in a single room.

You will be asked to wash your hands every time you use the toilet, commode or bedpan and before you eat. The nurses will help you if necessary.

It is important that all staff and visitors wash their hands when they come into or leave your room. Do not be shy about reminding everyone to wash their hands. **Alcohol hand gels are not effective at killing *Clostridium difficile*.**

Staff will wear gloves and aprons when they are helping you to use the toilet or when they are removing any bedpans or commodes from your room.

It is important that your room is kept clean. Any spillages of faeces must be dealt with by the nurses straight away and the domestic staff should clean your room thoroughly at least once a day. Do not bring too many belongings into hospital. If your room becomes too cluttered, it is difficult for the domestic staff to keep it clean.

Will I need any treatment?

Mild diarrhoea may resolve as soon as the antibiotics that caused the diarrhoea are no longer taken. If you need to keep taking these antibiotics or you have more serious diarrhoea, you may need to be treated by the use of another medication either metronidazole or vancomycin which must be taken for 14 days. Your doctor will decide on suitable treatment.

Can my personal laundry be washed at home?

Yes. Soiled laundry should be taken home in a plastic bag or carrier bag. Garments should be placed in a washing machine, separately to other family members' laundry and washed on the hottest cycle they can withstand. The person handling the garments for washing should wash their hands thoroughly afterwards and throw away the plastic bag.

Will *Clostridium difficile* stop me from going home?

Once the medical staff feel that you are well enough to go home, *Clostridium difficile* will not prevent you from going home; you can finish the course of medication at home. If you live in a Nursing/Residential home, or long term care facility, you will need to be clear of diarrhoea for 48 hours before being discharged.

What else is important?

You should continue to carefully wash your hands after using the toilet, and before meals. If your diarrhoea does not settle, or returns when you have finished your 14 days of treatment, please contact your GP for advice. If you need to start antibiotics for any reason following your discharge it is important to inform your GP/or the prescribing nurse about your recent *Clostridium difficile* infection.

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