

Clostridioides difficile



What is Clostridioides difficile?

This is a type of bacteria (germ), which may be passed from person to person, and is found in the intestines (gut) of both healthy and sick people. It:

- may cause diarrhoea and sometimes more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis (inflammation of the bowel)
- can be difficult to remove from the environment.

How might I catch it?

By swallowing some of the Clostridioides difficile bacteria, when the healthy (normal) bacteria in your gut have been affected by the use of antibiotics.

- You may also get some of the bacteria on your hands if you touch an infected person, or something that they have touched.

What are the symptoms?

- Watery diarrhoea
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain/tenderness.

Who is most at risk?

- People over 65 years
- People taking, or have recently taken, antibiotics
- People staying in hospital or a care home for a long time
- People who have a weakened immune system – for example, from having a long-term condition like diabetes or kidney failure, or treatment like chemotherapy
- People taking a proton pump inhibitor (PPI), such as omeprazole, or other medicines that reduce stomach acid
- People who had a C. diff infection in the past.

How is it diagnosed?

A sample of your faeces (stools) would be tested in our laboratory.

How is it treated?

- Stopping any antibiotics currently taking, if possible
- Taking a course of another antibiotic that can treat the C. diff infection as per doctor's advice
- Drink plenty of water to avoid dehydration.

The symptoms should improve a few days after starting the new course of antibiotics, but DO NOT discontinue taking antibiotics without the doctor's advice since it may be 1 to 2 weeks before the infection clears up completely.

How can I protect others and myself?

Do:

- Wash your hands regularly using soap and water since alcohol rubs do not kill the Clostridioides difficile bacteria
- Stay at home until at least 72 hours after your diarrhoea stops
- Clean the toilet and area around it with disinfectant after each use
- Wash clothes and sheets with faeces on separately from other washing at the highest possible temperature.

Don't:

- Do not share towels and flannels
- Do not take medicine to stop diarrhoea like loperamide because it can prevent the infection being cleared from your body.

How can healthcare staff prevent the spread of infection?

- Infected patients will be nursed in a single room with the door closed
- Staff will wear disposable gloves and aprons whilst caring for infected patients
- Staff will wash their hands with soap and water and not alcohol rub/gel
- Cleaning of the environment will take place with a chlorine based detergent.

If I catch it, what happens when I get home?

- If your symptoms return you should see your GP as soon as possible
- Courses of some antibiotics may cause diarrhoea to return, if this happens, see your GP as soon as possible
- Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet and before preparing food
- Household members are not usually at risk as long as the mentioned preventive measures are done.

Where can I get further information?

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

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690

