

Infection Prevention and Control

Clostridium difficile



Information Leaflet

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile (*C diff*) is a bacterium (germ) that is found in the gut and can cause diarrhoea in vulnerable people. *C diff* infection is most commonly seen in elderly people and people whose immune systems are weak, particularly those who have had recent antibiotic treatment.

C diff colonisation is when *C diff* is living harmlessly in the gut but not causing diarrhoea.

How did I get *C diff*?

C diff can be picked up on your hands from the environment or from the hands of others and then transferred to your gut via your mouth when eating. In vulnerable people, particularly those who have recently had antibiotics, the normal bacteria in the gut may have been reduced allowing the *C diff* bacteria to multiply and cause diarrhoea.

How is *C diff* infection treated?

Antibiotics are used to treat *C diff* infections. If you are already on antibiotics for an infection or on medication for your bowels these may be stopped.

How can I prevent passing *C diff* to others?

You may be moved into a single room which you will need to remain in until your symptoms of diarrhoea have been stopped for two days. The staff caring for you will wear aprons and gloves whilst in your room and clean within the room with a specialised cleaning product. This is to prevent *C diff* from living in the environment.

It is very important that you and anyone who comes into your room washes their hands with soap and water as hygienic hand rub does not work against *C diff*. Washing your hands with soap and water after you have used the toilet and before you eat is very important.

Can I still have visitors?

Yes you can still have visitors. Visitors should come to you last if they have others to visit in the hospital. Visitors should be asked to clean their hands with soap and water before and after visiting you. Elderly people and people whose immune systems are weak are more at risk of picking up *C diff* so tell them not to visit until your diarrhoea has stopped.

Will having *C diff* affect my treatment?

Non urgent tests or treatments that mean you have to go to another area of the hospital may need to be postponed until your diarrhoea has stopped to help prevent spreading the infection.

Am I able to go home with *C diff*?

You will be able to go home as soon as you are well enough. If you need extra fluid due to having diarrhoea this will need to be given through a drip which means staying in hospital.

If you live in a nursing or residential home you may need to be two days without symptoms of diarrhoea before you can go home to reduce the risk of spreading the infection in the home.

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please speak to your doctor, nurse or Infection Prevention staff.

Infection Prevention Team 01535 294848

Write any questions/queries below

The Public Health England website and will give further guidance and information: <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection/infectious-diseases>

If you require this leaflet in other languages or formats please telephone the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on: 01535 294019 for advice.

Please raise any issue you may have about your care and treatment with a member of staff. Raising your concerns will not adversely affect the care you will receive.

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