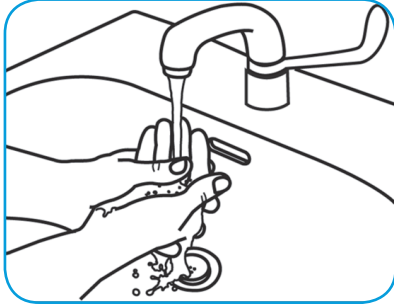


What can I do to stop the spread of C. diff?

It is important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, especially after you use the toilet and before you eat.



What happens when I go home?

If you suffer from diarrhoea again after you have returned home, you should contact your GP. The hospital staff will have let your GP know that you have had a C. diff infection while you were in hospital. You may have to give another sample of your faeces to your GP.

If you need any more information, please ask the staff in your ward for help.

Hospital staff phone number:

Clostridium difficile infection

We can give you this leaflet in different languages, in larger print, and in Braille (in English only). Please phone 0141 300 1100 for more information.

Information for hospital patients
and visitors



What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (C. diff) is a bacterium (germ) that some people have naturally in the bowel. C. diff normally doesn't cause any problems in healthy people.

How do I get C. diff infection?

The good bacteria in the gut normally protect against infections caused by C. diff. However, if you are taking antibiotics to treat an infection, these kill both the good and bad bacteria. When this happens, C. diff can grow quickly and produce poisons (toxins) that can give you diarrhoea and fever. Elderly people and people who have certain medical procedures to the bowel are most likely to get C. diff infections.

How do I know if I am infected with C. diff?

The symptoms of C. diff infection include mild to severe diarrhoea, fever and stomach pains. If you have these symptoms, a sample of your faeces (bowel movement) will be sent to a laboratory to test if you are infected with C. diff. The laboratory test usually takes one to two days.

How serious is the infection?

C. diff makes poisons that can cause swelling, soreness and damage to the inside lining of the bowel. How bad the infection is varies greatly.

In many cases the infection is mild and will only last a few days. Diarrhoea often clears away without any treatment for C. diff.

In some cases the effects are more serious, lasting for several weeks and it may be necessary to treat the infection. Symptoms of severe infection include diarrhoea with blood in it and stomach pain, which can make you feel very unwell. A minority of severe cases may be life-threatening.

How does C. diff spread in hospitals?

C. diff is passed out in the faeces of people who are infected. C. diff can survive for a long time in the surroundings, on any surface, in toilet areas, on clothing, sheets and furniture. People can accidentally pick it up by touching dirty (contaminated) surfaces and then touching their mouth or eating. Healthcare workers, visitors and patients can spread the infection to themselves and others by not washing their hands.

How will I be treated if I get C. diff infection while I am in hospital?

If you have diarrhoea because you have a C. diff infection, you may be put in a single room or be given your own toilet or commode to prevent the infection spreading to other patients. Your doctors may stop your antibiotics, or change them to another type.

What are hospitals doing to prevent C. diff infections?

When possible, patients with C. diff will be cared for in a single room or in a certain area of the hospital ward. All healthcare workers, as well as visitors and patients, must wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, as alcohol-based hand-rubs do not work well against C. diff. Healthcare workers should also wear gloves and aprons when they care for patients with C. diff. Areas where C. diff is present are disinfected as well as being cleaned normally.

If I am visiting hospital, what can I do to prevent the spread of C. diff to others and to protect myself?

Healthy people are not usually at risk of getting C. diff and can safely visit patients with C. diff. If you are visiting, you should:

- always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water when you enter and leave hospital ward areas;
- not bring food into the hospital, not eat at the bedside of the person you are visiting, not sit on beds or visit other patients in the hospital at the same time; and
- avoid using patients' toilets, moving around the ward, or visiting if you feel unwell yourself.