

# Clostridium difficile Patient Information

## What is Clostridium difficile (C. diff)?

C. diff is a bacteria that live in the gut of some people along with other bacteria. Some antibiotics may change the natural balance of bacteria in the gut and give the opportunity to C. diff to make an infection during the course of antibiotics or even after completing the course. The toxins produced by C. diff may cause diarrhea which may have a particularly unpleasant smell. Other symptoms may include stomach cramps, fever, nausea and loss of appetite.

## How did I get C. diff?

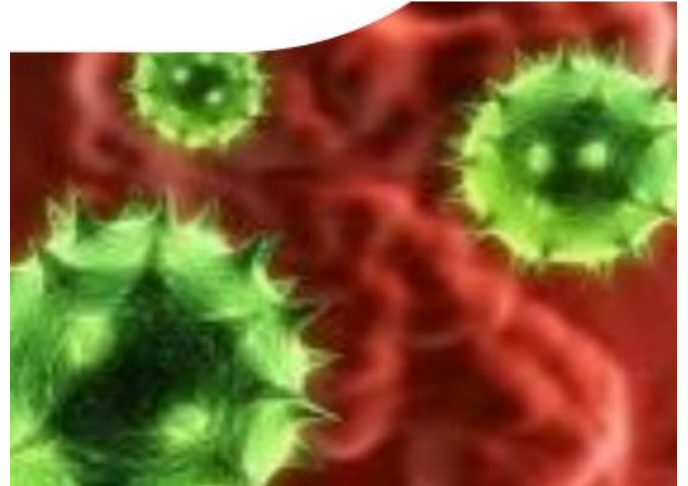
If a person has C. diff in their gut, the bacteria is passed out in the faeces and can contaminate toilet seats, hands, clothing and surrounding surfaces. The bacteria can live on these surfaces for a long time. If you touch a contaminated surface and then touch your mouth or eat, bacteria can enter your body. It can then start to grow in your bowel. For healthy people, the risk of C. diff infection is low.

## How will I be treated for C. diff diarrhoea?

In some cases, the antibiotics you were taking may have caused C. diff diarrhoea. These may be stopped and you will be given different antibiotics to treat C. diff. Drinking plenty of water will keep you hydrated.

If you have any infection at a later date that requires antibiotic treatment, you should remind

your doctor or midwife of the history of C. diff.



## How can I reduce the spread of C. diff?

If you are in hospital and have C. diff you may be in a single ensuite room until the diarrhoea settles down. Staff may wear aprons and gloves. You should wash your hands after toileting and before eating food. It is important for visitors to wash their hands with soap and water and not use alcohol hand gel. Once the diarrhoea has stopped for two days you can come out of isolation.

## What happens when I go home?

If you still have diarrhoea when you go home continue your treatment and drink plenty of fluids. Wash your hands after toileting and use your own towel. Keep the toilet flushed and the seat, rim and handle clean. C. diff is of very low risk to family and friends once they are reasonably well.