
Going home with C. difficile

What is C. difficile?

- Clostridioides difficile, also known as C. difficile or C. diff is a bacteria (germ).
- It is one of the many types of bacteria that is found in the bowel and poop (stool).
- People can carry C. difficile in their bowel without causing diarrhea.
- Sometimes C. difficile can cause an infection in your bowel. C. difficile illness is usually mild but can cause severe diarrhea.
- You can get C. difficile when the antibiotics you are taking kill off the good germs in your bowel and allow C. difficile to grow.
- Being elderly, having a weakened immune system, or frequent antibiotic use may increase your chances of getting C. difficile.
- Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are at a very low risk of getting diarrhea from C. difficile.

Symptoms include:

- nausea or feeling sick to your stomach
- fever
- abdominal (stomach) pain or tenderness
- frequent watery diarrhea
- decreased interest in food
- poop often described as having a “horse barn odour”

Clean your hands

- When you go home with C. difficile, continue to clean your hands well:
 - after using the toilet
 - after touching dirty surfaces
 - before eating
 - before preparing meals
 - after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
 - after using equipment or other items shared by others

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Personal care

- Do not share personal care items.
- Washing with regular soap is fine.
- A liquid hand soap with a pump is the best for getting rid of bacteria from your hands. Remember to use friction and wash all hand surfaces for a minimum of 15 seconds. Dry your hands on your own personal towel or use paper towels. You can also use hand sanitizer if your hands are not visibly dirty.

How long will it take for C. difficile to go away?

- This is hard to predict. Depending on your health, it can take a few weeks or several months to go away.

Can C. difficile come back?

- Yes, it can come back.
- If you have diarrhea, fever and/or abdominal pain during treatment for C. difficile or after treatment is finished, see a doctor right away.
- Inform the doctor that you recently had C. difficile. A history of having C. difficile may change your treatment.

Can family members get C. difficile?

- There is a slight chance of spreading C. difficile to a family member. A family member who is ill has a higher chance of getting C. difficile. Cleaning your hands well before and after contact with each other will help prevent the spread of C. difficile.

Will having C. difficile affect my activities at home?

- We want you to get back to your normal activities as soon as your diarrhea slows down and you are feeling well.
- You can visit friends and family who are in good health. Visitors who are sick may be at risk of getting C. difficile from you. Visitors who are sick should delay their visit until you and they are well.
- All visitors and household members should clean their hands before and after contact.
- You can resume sexual activities.

Is it safe for babies and young children to visit?

- If the baby or child is sick, delay the visit until after he or she is well.
- The most important thing you must do is to clean your hands well before and after contact.

I have pets. Can they pick up C. difficile?

- Yes. Pets can carry C. difficile.
- They can pass it to you and you can pass it to them.
- Before and after you touch your pets or their food, you need to clean your hands.

If someone helps me with my direct care, do they need to protect their clothes and wear gloves?

- C. difficile bacteria is in your poop.
- If you need help cleaning up, the person helping you needs to wear gloves and to cover up their clothes to prevent soiling.
- Hands should always be cleaned after removing gloves.

Do I need to eat a special diet at home?

- It is important to eat a well balanced diet.
- If you have been on antibiotics for a while, your bowel will have lost many of the normal bacteria that grow there keep you healthy. Eating a well balanced diet will help restore the normal bacteria in your bowel.
- To learn more about healthy eating, Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide is available online:

http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/food-guide-aliment/index_e.html

<http://www.eatrightontario.ca/en/Articles/Probiotics/prebiotics/The-Pros-of-Probiotics.aspx>

Do I need to wash my clothes separately from the rest of the family?

- No. Wash clothes with household laundry detergent on a regular cycle. If your clothes are heavily soiled with body fluids, like poop or urine, pre-soak and then wash them separately with detergent.

Are there special instructions for house cleaning?

- Keep a regular cleaning schedule using diluted bleach (One part bleach to 10 parts water) or a bleach product. The most important rooms to keep clean are the bathroom and the kitchen.
- If you are not able to do any cleaning, you will need to inform the people who plan your care when you return home.
- Tips for cleaning:
 - Wet the surface well and clean using good friction.
 - Allow the surface to air dry.
 - Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with stool such as the toilet and sink. Remove any stool and then clean as described above.

Do I need to wash my dishes separately?

- No. Dishes can be washed by hand with soap and water or washed in a dishwasher.

What should I do if I need further health care?

- When any further health care is needed, please let the health care worker know that you have or have had C. difficile.
- You need to give this information:
 - when you go to the dentist
 - when you go to a hospital or clinic
 - anytime you need to give a medical history
- Although healthy people are not a high risk of picking up C. difficile, sick people might not be able to fight it off. The greatest risk of spreading C. difficile is in the hospital. If you have to go to the hospital, you will be checked and may need to go on Contact Precautions (isolation).

For more information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/fact-sheet-clostridium-difficile-difficile.html>

This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask Infection Prevention & Control or your health care provider.