

## **Clostridioides difficile**

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### **What is it?**

- 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 your 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, 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”

### **How is it spread?**

- C. difficile can spread on things like toilets, flush handles, bedpans and commodes.
- When you touch these items, your hands can pick up C. difficile.
- If you do not clean your hands and then you touch your mouth with your dirty hands, you can get C. difficile in your mouth which then spreads to your bowel.
- Your hands can also spread C. difficile to other things where they can live for a long time if the item is not cleaned well.

## Is there treatment for it?

- C. difficile is usually treated by stopping the current antibiotic.
- Mild diarrhea may stop as soon as the current antibiotic(s) are no longer taken.
- You may be started on a new antibiotic, Vancomycin, that works to kill C. difficile.
- Do not take any medication used to stop diarrhea such as Immodium™ or Kaopectate™.
- If your diarrhea continues or comes back, see a doctor right away.

## What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Cleaning your hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water is the best way to prevent the spread of C. difficile.
- If you are in the hospital, you will be cared for using Contact Precautions (isolation) - staff and visitors will wear a gown and gloves.
- If you are at home:
  - Remember to clean your hands well and often.
  - Keep the bathroom and kitchen clean – they are most important.
  - Use a household cleaner with bleach or diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) especially on the toilet area.
  - Remember to wet the surface such as a toilet seat well with the cleaning product and use a lot of “elbow grease” to clean and let it air dry.
- Use disposable cloths and/or paper towels to clean to avoid moving C. difficile around to clean areas.

## For more information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/cdiff-eng.php>

**Adherence to Infection Prevention and Control measures by staff and visitors is required to prevent spread of the infection.**

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.  
Clean your hands.**



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.