

Clostridium difficile

Associated Disease (CDAD)

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What is Clostridium difficile (C-diff)?

Clostridium difficile (C-diff) is one of many different bacteria that we may carry in our bowels, rarely causing us problems.

What are the symptoms of C-diff infection and how long do they last?

People who are infected with C-diff will develop diarrhoea.

- They may have increased frequency of needing to open their bowels and may struggle to get to the toilet in time
- Likely experience some abdominal pain
- May feel generally unwell.

How do you get infected with C-diff?

Infection with C-diff happens most frequently when people take antibiotics. Some antibiotics change the delicate balance of bacteria in our bowel, allowing C-diff bacteria to grow in number, causing diarrhoea.

In more serious cases C-diff bacteria can cause severe inflammation in the bowel, which in a few cases can be life threatening.

It is possible for the infection to spread from person to person because those suffering with C-diff associated disease shed spores in their faeces and the spores can survive for long periods of time in the environment.

How is diagnosis made?

By sending a sample of diarrhoea to the microbiology laboratory for testing.

Is it infectious?

Healthy people are rarely affected by C-diff. The greatest risk is to those who are frail and unwell and have had a recent course of antibiotics, like hospital patients.

If frail visitors are planning to visit the ward, please ask the nurse for advice.

It is important that all visitors wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water when they arrive and before leaving the Ward. Please ask the nurse if you are unsure.

It is not necessary for visitors to wear gloves and aprons unless they are assisting you with washing or using the toilet.

How do you treat C-diff?

If you receive a diagnosis of C-diff, any antibiotics you are currently taking will be reviewed.

You will also be prescribed an antibiotic to treat the C-diff infection.

It is important to tell staff each time you have diarrhoea. This will help them to monitor your condition.

Because there is a risk to other patients acquiring an/the infection, it will be necessary to care for you in a single room whilst you are having diarrhoea. You may be transferred to the cohort ward where staff will be able to give you any specialist care you may require.

C-diff can be spread on people's hands; therefore staff caring for you will decontaminate their hands with soap and water and wear gloves and aprons whilst attending to you. This is to protect them, you and other patients.

All wards are thoroughly cleaned every day using detergent and bleach to remove bacteria that may be present in the environment.

Will I have to stay in hospital until C.diff has cleared?

- Patients usually stay in hospital until their condition has improved and they are well enough to care for themselves at home.
- If you live in your own home and are able to care for yourself and eating and drinking normally, you may be discharged earlier to complete treatment at home if you are well; this will need to be discussed with your consultant.
- If you live in residential or nursing care settings, you will need to be symptom free to return home to prevent the risk to other residents.
- If you are waiting to be transferred to another hospital your transfer may be delayed until your diarrhoea has settled.

How will this affect my visitors?

- Visitors are allowed as normal.
- Visitors will be requested to decontaminate their hands with soap and water on entering and leaving the ward. If helping with personal care they must wear gloves and aprons which must be disposed of in the orange clinical waste bin.

Hands must be decontaminated with soap and water following any period of hands on care.

- Please do not allow visitors to sit or lie on your bed.

What happens when I stop having diarrhoea?

Once your diarrhoea has stopped it means the infection is settling. If your bowels have returned to normal it may be possible to move you out of a single room/cohort ward.

What can I do to speed up my recovery?

It is important to wash your hands with soap and water before you eat and drink and after you have been to the toilet.

Make sure any food you have is covered or kept inside your locker (unless it needs to be in the fridge).

What happens about washing my clothes?

Whilst you are in the hospital and having diarrhoea it is advisable to wear hospital clothing.

If you have any soiled personal clothing, the nurses will put them in a plastic bag in your locker for your relatives/visitors to take home.

- Clothes should be placed directly from the bag into the washing machine.
- Soiled clothing must be washed separately.
- Hands should be then washed thoroughly with soap and water.
- A pre-wash is advisable.
- Clothes should be washed at the highest possible temperature they can tolerate.

Do you need to stay off work or school?

- Whilst in hospital you will be nursed in a single room or on the cohort ward. This will be until you have stopped having diarrhoea for 72 hours and you are well enough to be moved out into a bay or to be discharged home.
- When you feel well and are symptom free you may return to work or other activities.

What happens when I go home?

- You may be discharged from hospital before your infection is cleared.
- Clean toilet seats, toilet bowls, flush handles, taps, hand basins and any other areas that might have been soiled with detergent and hot water, rinsing with household disinfectant.
- Do not use gels or wipes instead of washing hands with soap and water. Gels and wipes do not remove C-diff.

What happens if I get diarrhoea again?

Sometimes diarrhoea can start again. This may be after you have gone home or whilst you are still in hospital.

If you are still in hospital, inform the nursing staff looking after you. If you are at home you should inform your GP immediately. When you are discharged, a letter will be sent to them explaining that you have had C-diff diarrhoea; a letter will also be given to you to give to your GP out of hours if necessary.

For further information:

Please speak with an Infection Prevention & Control Nurse.

The Infection Prevention Team

Telephone: 01493 452168

Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

Trust Values

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Courtesy and respect• A welcoming and positive attitude• Polite, friendly and interested in people• Value and respect people as individuals
So people feel welcome | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsive communication• Listen to people & answer their questions• Keep people clearly informed• Involve people
So people feel in control |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Attentively kind and helpful• Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity• Attentive, responsive & take time to help• Visible presence of staff to provide care
So people feel cared for | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective and professional• Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring• Effective care / services from joined up teams• Organised and timely, looking to improve
So people feel safe |



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240