

What about my laundry?

Personal laundry should be bagged and kept in your room for relatives/friends to collect as soon as possible. Items should be washed separately from the rest of your families laundry in the usual way with normal detergents ideally on a hot wash (60°C or above if the material will withstand the temperature). Hands must be washed with soap and water after handling your personal soiled linen.

Good hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of *Clostridium difficile*
Posters showing the best way to wash your hands are available at the hand wash sinks.

Will this prevent me from going home?

Having *Clostridium difficile* infection will not necessarily prevent you from going home. If you are being discharged to a nursing/residential home the hospital will inform the home of your condition prior to discharge.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.

Patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the Trust's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/department staff.



INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

**Proud to be clean,
it's everyone's business!**

Clostridium Difficile

*Information for patients
and carers*

What is *Clostridium difficile* (also known as *C. difficile* or *C. diff*)?

Clostridium difficile is a bacterium/bug that can be found in the bowel. It is found in healthy people and those who are unwell. About 3% of the population carries *Clostridium difficile* in their bowel without it causing harm. There are millions of normal bacteria that live in the bowel which help keep *Clostridium difficile* under control. *Clostridium difficile* can become harmful when found in large numbers.

What is *Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI)?

When there is an imbalance of the normal bacteria in the bowel, *Clostridium difficile* may become present in large numbers. When this happens it produces toxins (like a poison) that affect the lining of the bowel and give symptoms of infection. The symptoms are:

- Diarrhoea which is often watery,
- Cramping pain, sometimes you may experience nausea.
- Rarely blood may be seen in the stool/faeces.

Those at risk are:

- Patients over 65 years of age
- People who have had surgery on their bowel
- People with an impaired immune system e.g. cancer patients
- Patients that have had antibiotics recently (within the past 4 weeks)

What happens when I take antibiotics?

Some antibiotics change the balance of bacteria in our bowel, allowing *Clostridium difficile* to grow in greater numbers. This can cause diarrhoea and may lead to disease which can be severe in some cases.

How is *Clostridium difficile* diagnosed?

If a person has been taking or is currently taking antibiotics, and has diarrhoea, then *Clostridium difficile* infection may be suspected. Diagnosis is made by sending a sample of faeces to the laboratory to confirm whether *Clostridium difficile* toxin is present.

How is *Clostridium difficile* spread?

A person is at greatest risk of getting *Clostridium difficile* infection if they are taking certain antibiotics. *Clostridium difficile* can produce spores that can survive in the environment for a long period of time. It can be spread from one person to another via the faecal-oral route, especially when one person has diarrhoea

In this instance, hand sanitizer is not effective. To avoid spreading the infection, strict hand hygiene using soap and water must be performed by the patient, their visitors and all staff. It is not usually necessary for visitors to wear gloves and aprons, however if visitors are having close contact with a patient who has *Clostridium difficile* Infection (e.g. helping with washing and dressing) we recommend that they are worn. Please ask the nurses if you are unsure.

What happens in hospital once *Clostridium difficile* is suspected?

Within the hospital you will be moved into a single room (if you are not already in your own room). This is to ensure that the potential spread of infection is limited. All healthcare staff will wash their hands with soap and water before and after contact with you, your bed linen and your immediate environment. Healthcare staff will also wear gloves and an apron for care and interactions with you and your environment. These will be removed before staff leave the room and they will wash their hands with soap and water.

How long will I stay in a single room?

Once the diarrhoea has settled and your bowel motions have returned to *normal*, the Infection Prevention and Control Team will advise when your isolation can be discontinued.

How is *Clostridium difficile* treated?

In most instances it is easily treated with a course of antibiotics that are active against the bacteria. It will be important that the whole course of treatment is completed, even if the symptoms resolve, otherwise the symptoms could re-occur. If this happens a further course of treatment may be prescribed. No further stool testing is required once the infection has been diagnosed.

Can I have visitors?

You can have visitors but please seek advice from the nursing staff on the ward. All visitors will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water before entering and prior to leaving.

What about my laundry?

Personal laundry should be bagged and kept in your room for relatives/friends to collect as soon as possible. Items should be washed separately from the rest of your families laundry in the usual way with normal detergents ideally on a hot wash (60°C or above if the material will withstand the temperature). Hands must be washed with soap and water after handling your personal soiled linen.

