



Clostridiodes difficile (C. diff) infection

A patient's guide

Clostridium difficile (C. diff) is a type of bacteria that can cause diarrhoea. It often affects people who have been taking antibiotics. It can usually be treated with a different type of antibiotic.

Check if you have a C. diff infection

Common symptoms of a C. diff infection include:

- diarrhoea
- a high temperature
- loss of appetite
- feeling sick
- a stomach-ache

How you get a C. diff infection

C. diff bacteria usually live harmlessly in your bowel along with lots of other types of bacteria.

But sometimes when you take antibiotics, the balance of bacteria in your bowel can change, causing an infection.

When someone has a C. diff infection, it can spread to other people very easily if the bacteria found in the person's poo get onto objects and surfaces.



Who's at risk

You're more likely to get a C. diff infection if:

- you're over 65 years
- you're taking, or have recently taken, antibiotics
- you're staying in hospital or a care home for a long time
- you have a weakened immune system – for example, from having a long-term condition like diabetes or kidney failure, or treatment like chemotherapy
- you're taking a proton pump inhibitor (PPI), such as omeprazole, or other medicines that reduce stomach acid
- you've had a C. diff infection in the past

How to prevent spreading a C. diff infection

C. diff infections can spread very easily. There are some things you can do to reduce the risk of passing it on to others.

Do

- stay at home until at least 48 hours after your diarrhoea stops
- wash your hands regularly using soap and water
- clean the toilet and area around it with disinfectant after each use
- wash clothes and sheets with poo on separately from other washing at the highest possible temperature

Don't

- do not share towels and flannels
- do not take medicine to stop diarrhoea like loperamide because it can prevent the infection being cleared from your body

It's important to get medical advice if you:

- have diarrhoea and you're taking, or have recently taken, antibiotics
- you have bloody diarrhoea or bleeding from the bottom
- you have diarrhoea for more than 7 days

You can call 111 or [get help from 111 online](#)



Any further questions?

- If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Infection Control team, on 020 7288 3679, or you can ask the department manager to contact us.
- Additional information can be found on:
 - NHS Health A to Z <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/c-difficile/>
 - NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/

The information in this leaflet has been sourced from <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/c-difficile/>

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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