

How to prevent the spread of Clostridioides difficile (C. difficile)

Infection Prevention

Information for Patients

Produced: June 2025

Review: June 2028

Leaflet number: 1625 Version: 1

What is Clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides difficile (often called C. difficile or C. diff) is a germ (bacteria) that lives harmlessly in the gut (bowel) of some people. This is around 1 in every 30 healthy adults.

How does C. difficile infection (CDI) start?

When there is less 'good' bacteria in the gut, C. difficile bacteria can grow quickly and make toxins (poisons). This irritates the gut and can cause diarrhoea (liquid poo). This can also happen when you have taken antibiotics.

What are the symptoms?

The main symptom of C. difficile infection is diarrhoea. Other symptoms can include:

- stomach cramps and pains
- fever
- feeling sick (nausea)
- loss of appetite

Symptoms can be mild to severe. It may last from a few days to a few weeks. In some patients with bad symptoms, the diarrhoea may have blood in it from toxins. This can inflame and damage the gut (colon). This is known as colitis.

**Health information and support is available at www.nhs.uk
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

How do I know if I have CDI?

We will need a sample of your diarrhoea to look for *C. difficile* toxins. The test result will take 1 or 2 days.

Who is at risk of getting CDI?

You may be more likely to get a *C. difficile* infection if you:

- Are taking or have recently finished taking antibiotics or other medication that alter the normal balance of bacteria in your bowel.
- Have a reduced ability to fight infection.
- Receiving treatment for cancer.
- Have spent a long time in hospital.
- Have had surgery or a procedure on your stomach or bowel.

How can CDI be treated?

- Where possible, any antibiotics or other medication you are taking will be stopped or changed. Your diarrhoea may then go away without any treatment.
- *C. difficile* infection is treated with specific antibiotics for the infection, such as vancomycin or fidaxomicin, which are taken by mouth for 10 days.
- Some patients with mild symptoms may not need any treatment.
- Drinking plenty of fluids will help keep you hydrated.

During your stay in hospital

- Family and friends can still visit you, along with children and pregnant women. If any of your visitors are at risk (see above section) ask a member of staff for advice.
- We may move you to a single room. This is to help reduce the spread of infection to other patients.
- Staff will wear gloves and aprons when caring for you or cleaning your room. Before leaving the single room they will remove the gloves and apron and wash their hands with soap and water.
- All your visitors must clean their hands before seeing you. They should also always wash their hands with soap and water before they leave your room.
- Hand sanitiser/gel does not work against *C. difficile*. You must wash your hands with soap and water.
- Visitors only need to wear gloves and apron if they are helping with your personal care. This could be helping you use the toilet or having a wash/shower.

- If visitors are seeing other people in hospital/nursing home on the same day it is best if they see you last.
- We may give you a commode (toilet chair) to use in the single room. Nursing staff will need to see your poo to see how you are improving.
- We will put a sign on your room door. This is to remind staff to have hand hygiene and wear gloves and apron.
- Your doctors, nursing staff and the infection prevention team, and a dietician if needed, will review your progress.
- When the diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours and you have passed a solid poo, we may move you back to a bed in a bay on a ward.
- If you are well enough we may discharge you home to finish your treatment.

How do we stop the spread of C. difficile?

- You must wash your hands with soap and water before eating any food and after going to the toilet.
- If you have to use a commode, bedpan or bottle to wee in, if you are unable to use the hand wash basin in your room, please ask for a bowl of water and soap to wash your hands afterwards.
- Try to keep the top of your locker and bedside table free from clutter. Try not to bring too many belongings into hospital. Too many items on top of your locker and bedside table makes it difficult to clean properly.
- Your visitors must wash their hands with soap and water after contact with you. If they helped you go to the toilet or wash you, they must wash their hands. Visitors must wash their hands after removing their gloves and apron.
- Keep food that you bring into hospital covered. This can be biscuits, cakes, sweets and fruit.
- Please tell a nurse if you find any area of your room dirty.

Washing of your personal clothes at home

- You must wash the clothing separately from the rest of the household washing.
- If you handle soiled clothes make sure you wash your hands afterward using soap and water.
- Use your normal washing powder or liquid.
- Follow the clothes washing label instructions.

At home with CDI:

- You must continue your treatment even if you have been discharged home. You must finish your antibiotics even if you feel better.
- Wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before making food and eating it.
- You can return to work if you:
 - feel well enough and
 - your diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours and you have had a solid poo.
- Sometimes your diarrhoea can return again. If your diarrhoea does come back please contact your GP. Do not take any anti-diarrhoeal medication.

Infection Prevention at Leicester's Hospitals

To reduce the risk of healthcare related infections across our hospitals we have a dedicated infection prevention team. They use policies which are evidence based and regularly reviewed.

We closely monitor infection rates across our hospitals. Any risks and trends are reported to our Infection Prevention Assurance Committee, Board of Directors and UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

Contact details:

Infection Prevention Team: 0116 2585448

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل
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જો તમને આ માહિતી અન્ય ભાષામાં જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો.
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

Previous reference:

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