



Clostridium difficile

VETERAN AND FAMILY GUIDE

Clostridium difficile is pronounced *Klo-STRID-ee-um dif-uh-seel* and is often called *C. diff*. *C. diff* can be a hard-to-treat infection and lead to other health problems.

WHAT IS A C. DIFF INFECTION?

C. diff is a germ that can cause diarrhea. Most cases of *C. diff* infection occur in patients taking antibiotics. The most common symptoms of a *C. diff* infection include:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Belly pain and tenderness

C. diff spores can live outside the human body for a very long time. Spores can be found on things such as bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures and medical equipment. *C. diff* infection can spread from person-to-person by contaminated equipment and on the hands of doctors, nurses, other health care providers and visitors.



Hand hygiene is the single most effective way to prevent the spread of infections!

HOW TO PRACTICE HAND HYGIENE:

Use SOAP AND WATER ONLY if you are diagnosed with *C. diff*.

To clean your hands with soap and water:

- Wet your hands with warm water.
- Apply soap and rub your hands together for at least 15 seconds.
- Rub your palms, fingernails, in between your fingers and the backs of your hands.
- Rinse and dry your hands.
- Turn the water off with a clean paper towel when using a public restroom.

Do not use alcohol-based hand sanitizers if you have *C. diff*. Use soap and water only.

GULF COAST VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM STAFF HELP PREVENT C. DIFF INFECTIONS BY:

- Hand washing before and after contact with every patient is performed. This can prevent *C. diff* and other germs from being passed from one patient to another.
- Hospital rooms and medical equipment are carefully cleaned between all patients.
- Contact precautions are used to help prevent *C. diff* from spreading to other patients.



CONTACT PRECAUTIONS MEAN:

Whenever possible, patients with *C. diff* will have a private room or share a room only with someone else with *C. diff*.

- Health care providers will put on gloves and wear a gown over clothing while taking care of patients with *C. diff*.
- Visitors will be asked to wear a gown and gloves.
- Just before leaving the patient's room, hospital providers and visitors will remove their gown and gloves and put them in the red biohazard bag and wash their hands with soap and water.
- Patients on contact precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible. They should not go to common areas such as the gift shop or cafeteria. They can go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.
- Patients are given antibiotics only when it is necessary.

INFORMATION TO HELP PREVENT *C. DIFF* INFECTIONS:

- Make sure all doctors, nurses and other health care providers clean their hands with soap and water before and after caring for you.
- It's okay to ask your doctor, nurse and any other staff members if they have washed their hands.
- Only take antibiotics as ordered by your doctor.
- Be sure to clean your own hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.

FAMILY AND VISITOR INFORMATION:

C. diff infection usually does not occur in persons who are not taking antibiotics. Visitors are not likely to get *C. diff*. Still, to make it safer for visitors, they should:

- Clean their hands with soap and water before they enter your room and as they leave your room.
- Wear protective gowns and gloves when they visit you.

WHAT DO YOU NEED TO DO WHEN YOU GO HOME FROM THE HOSPITAL?

Once you are home, return to your normal routine. To lower the chances of getting a *C. diff* infection again and to decrease the risk of spreading this infection to others:

- Take all medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor and pharmacist. Do not take half-doses or stop before you run out.
- Wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom and before making food.
- People who live with you need to wash their hands often as well.
- If your diarrhea worsens after you get home, tell your doctor right away.
- Your doctor may give you more instructions.



INFECTION CONTROL
is in everyone's hands

*If you have any questions,
check with your nurse.*



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PATIENT EDUCATION | CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE
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