



Clostridium Difficile (C. Diff): Antibiotic Associated Diarrhea

What is it?

Clostridium difficile is the bacteria most often associated with outbreaks of diarrhea and colitis in hospital patients. The C. Diff bacteria usually cause problems in people who have had antibiotic treatment. It can result in mild to serious illness. C. Diff bacteria can sometimes be found in the feces of healthy people and can also be carried without symptoms or disease by up to 46% of hospitalized adults.

How do I know if I have it?

Almost all patients who develop C. Diff diarrhea are on, or have recently been given, antibiotic medication. Diarrhea, sometimes “explosive,” is the most common symptom. The illness is mild in the majority of patients but sometimes may be severe with abdominal cramping, abdominal tenderness, and dehydration.

Is it contagious? Is it infectious?

Yes, it is highly contagious and infectious, especially when frequent bouts of diarrhea occur. The bacteria may be passed on to others unintentionally. Nearly all C. difficile infections in patients occur as a result of fecal-oral ingestion.

The ability of the bacteria to form spores enables them to survive unseen for long periods of time. Unwashed hands can spread the spores to food, water, and medications, anything that can be ingested. Remember, spores don't jump but everyone's unwashed hands can become carriers. The spores are often found on bedding, floors, and medical equipment, too. Patients, family members, visitors, as well as health care providers must keep their hands clean. Hand washing with soap and water and environmental cleaning is the key to control.

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Is there any treatment?

Stopping antibiotics, if clinically possible, and providing fluid replacement usually results in rapid improvement. Sometimes a course of an antibiotic, usually flagyl, or vancomycin is effective against the infection. Some patients experience multiple relapses and require additional antibiotic therapy.

What should I do if I have C Diff?

- You need to drink plenty of clear fluids. Water, non-fizzy fruit drinks or teas without milk are good. Your doctor may also prescribe a re-hydration solution as well. Personal hygiene should be very strict.
- You and everyone around you should always wash hands with warm, soapy water after going to the toilet and before handling food. If possible, you should not prepare food for others until the C. Diff is cleared up.
- The toilet, commode chair, bed environment needs to be kept clean. Clean toilet seats, hand rails, bedrails, and any area of frequent contact daily with a water and bleach solution.
 - According to the CDC, The mixture should include 1 part bleach to every 10 parts water; so, for example, if you are using a cup, mix 1 cup of bleach with 10 cups of water. This mixture can be used to clean the surfaces in your kitchen (for example, countertops and cutting boards) and bathrooms (for example, toilet seats, toilet bowl, flush handle and sink faucet handles). Mix only the amount of bleach and water that you will need to clean your kitchen and bathrooms once, and pour the rest down the drain.
 - If you have diarrhea, try to avoid using the same toilet that your family members use unless the toilet can be cleaned with the bleach and water mixture after each use.