

PATIENT INFORMATION

The facts about Clostridium Difficile/ PCR +ve diarrhoea (Referred to as “C Diff”)

What is C Diff?

C Diff causes a bacterial infection that affects the bowel causing offensive diarrhoea. This bacteria can sometimes be found in low numbers on the skin, gut and genital areas as part of the body's normal bacterial flora that live on the body, causing us no harm, and in some cases protecting us against infections.

When a person is given antibiotics, some of the normal protective bacteria in the gut are destroyed. This allows C Diff bacteria to flourish. It is more common in the elderly, those who are unwell and those on certain types of antibiotics.

How is C Diff spread?

C Diff is spread when a person swallows the bacteria. This can happen when hands are not washed after dealing with faeces, or by touching contaminated surfaces. C Diff bacteria have the ability to survive on fabrics and hard surfaces. It is important to wash hands thoroughly with liquid soap and water, particularly after using the toilet and when handling food. Alcohol hand gel is not effective against C.diff so should not be used.

How is it treated?

If possible, if you are on antibiotic therapy it will be stopped. In some cases the diarrhoea will then clear without further treatment. If the diarrhoea is severe then it may be treated with antibiotics, such as Vancomycin or Metronidazole. It is essential that you drink plenty of fluids if you can. If you are unable to do so, fluids into the vein may be required. You will be transferred into a single room to reduce the risk of environmental contamination, as this could put other patients on antibiotics at risk. You can be moved from the single room when you have had a formed stool, or the diarrhoea has stopped for 48 hours.

Will my hospital treatment be affected?

No! You will be allowed to attend other departments for investigations and the department will be informed of your condition. However if the treatment is not urgent, it may be postponed until the diarrhoea has settled.

Will I give C Diff to relatives, friends and carers?

There is little risk to relatives, carers or friends of catching the illness themselves. It is important however, that they are encouraged to wash and dry their hands after visiting.

What to do once discharged Home?

If you become symptomatic again once home, if possible designate a toilet just for your use. Ensure you contact your GP for further advice and treatment.

You and your family should wash your hands with soap and water. The toilet handle, taps, door and light switch handles should be washed daily with a weak bleach solution.

Good hand hygiene and cleanliness of the environment reduces the risk of you becoming re-infected with C Diff.

Duty of Candour

As a Trust we are committed to being open with patients and carers when events such as these occur so that we gain a shared understanding of what happened and what we can do to prevent such an incident occurring again in the future. If the incident involving you has been recorded on the Trust's incident reporting system a review will be undertaken.

If you require further advice after reading this leaflet please contact the Infection Control Support Department on (01803) 655757 and ask to speak to one of the Infection Control Nurses.

Reference: "C Diff – how to Deal with the Problem" - Department of Health 2009

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.