

PATIENT INFORMATION

The Facts about Clostridioides (aka Clostridium) difficile/PCR Positive Diarrhoea or C Difficile Infection (CDI) also Referred to as 'C Diff'

For Practice Nurses to give to Patients in the Community or
Mail to Patient or for collection by Carer.

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. *C diff* can form spores are resistant to the usual disinfectants and alcohol hand rubs.

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 and its spores have the ability to survive on fabrics and hard surfaces.

How is it treated?

If possible, if you are on antibiotic therapy it will be stopped or changed. In some patients the diarrhoea will then clear without further treatment. If the diarrhoea is severe then it may be treated with specific antibiotics effective against *C diff*. It is essential that you drink plenty of fluids if you can. If you cannot manage to or if the diarrhoea doesn't settle you must contact your Practice Nurses or GP straight away. If the practice is closed then contact the Out of Hours Service.

Will I give *C diff* to relatives, friends and carers?

There is little risk to relatives, carers or friends of catching the illness themselves. However, if they have:

- Antibiotics
- Or are Immunocompromised
- Underlying health problems

Good hand hygiene will reduce the risk of them becoming infected with *C diff* and if possible designate a toilet just for your use.

What to do afterwards?

If you become symptomatic again or if the diarrhoea does not get better after a few days, ensure you contact your Practice Nurse or 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 (e.g. Milton) or Flash with bleach.

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

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

Reference: “*C difficile* – how to Deal with the Problem” - Department of Health 2013 and NICE March 2019.

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