Clostridium Difficile (C. diff)

What you need to know

C. diff is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions, such as colitis.

Symptoms include:
• Watery diarrhea
• Fever
• Loss of appetite
• Nausea
• Abdominal pain or tenderness

When a person takes antibiotics, good germs that protect against infection are destroyed for several months. During this time, patients can get sick from C. diff if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with C. diff, and then touch their mouths or mucous membranes.

While taking antibiotics, it is important that you:
• Take your antibiotics as prescribed by your doctor.
• Take the full course of antibiotics. Do not stop taking the antibiotics as soon as you feel better.

Treatment of C. diff

Your doctor will develop a treatment plan for you, which may include medicines. Three of the most frequently used medicines are:
• fidaxomicin (Dificid)
• metronidazole (Flagyl)
• vancomycin (Vancocin)

Take your medicines as prescribed by your doctor.

To help prevent the spread of C. diff

• Enteric Contact Precautions are used with patients who have diarrhea. Everyone who enters the patient’s room should wear gloves and a gown. Staff members wear a gown and gloves when they enter the room and may have direct contact with the patient or the items in the patient’s room.

• Wash your hands often with soap and water! C. diff is found in stool (bowel movements). Proper hand hygiene can prevent the spread of bacteria to surfaces in the room of patients with diarrhea. It can be spread from person to person through contact with patients or the surfaces in the patient’s environment. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is not effective for killing this type of bacteria.
Leaving your room and visitor policy

To avoid the spread of germs to others, we encourage you to stay in your room. When leaving your room, you must put on a clean gown and wash your hands with soap and water. Visitors may come to see you. They will be asked to wear gloves and a gown when they enter the room. They should remove the gloves and gown, and wash their hands with soap and water before they leave your room.

Home care

Family members should also wash their hands before and after caring for you. Wear gloves if contact is made with blood or bodily fluids, such as stool.

- Always wash your hands after removing your gloves. **Frequent hand washing with soap and water is the best way to prevent the spread of C. diff.**
- Clean surfaces in bathrooms, the kitchen, and other areas on a regular basis with a household disinfectant or diluted bleach. Use ½ cup of bleach in 1 quart of water.

For more information

Please ask your doctor or nurse if you have questions about C. diff, Contact Precautions, or any aspect of your care and treatment. You may also ask for these patient education materials:

- Preventing the Spread of Infection
- Hand Washing
- CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention), [Clostridium difficile Infection Information for Patients](http://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cdiff/cdiff-patient.html)

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

For more health information, contact the Library for Health Information at 614-293-3707 or e-mail [health-info@osu.edu](mailto:health-info@osu.edu).

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