

Clostridium difficile is one of the many bacteria (germs) that are found in the bowel and can live there harmlessly. About three per cent of healthy adults in the community carries *C. difficile* in their bowel.

Sometimes having antibiotics can affect the normal balance of bacteria in the bowel. If this happens, *C. difficile* may have a chance to multiply and cause symptoms (infection).

How does it affect me?

The symptoms of *C. difficile* infection can vary from nothing to diarrhoea of varying severity, abdominal (tummy) pain or tenderness, nausea (feeling sick) and sometimes a high temperature.

How is it identified?

The nurses will ask patients with recognised symptoms of *C. difficile* to provide a sample of faeces and send it to the laboratory to be examined.

How are patients with *Clostridium difficile* infection nursed?

Ideally a patient with *C. difficile* infection will be nursed in a side room to prevent the bacteria spreading to other patients on the ward.

Can it be treated?

Yes, in two main ways:

- by stopping, if possible, the antibiotics that have allowed the *C. difficile* to multiply,
- and by using certain other antibiotics to kill the *C. difficile*.

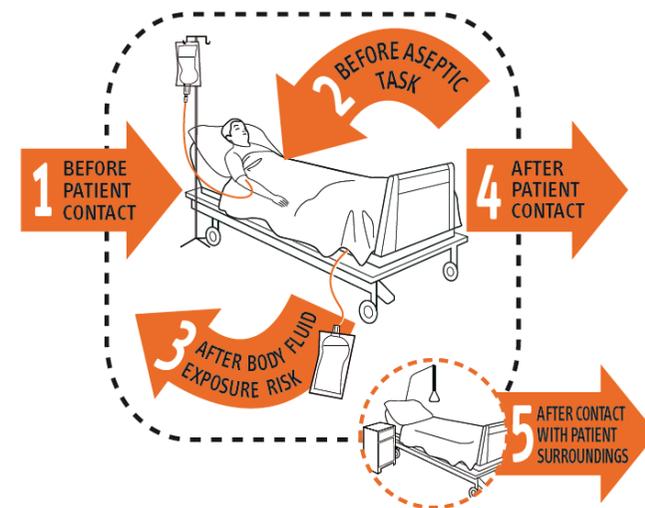
Your doctor can explain which is the best treatment for you.

How can the spread of the bacteria be minimised?

By thorough hand washing using soap and water by everyone involved in your care. Alcohol hand rub is ineffective and therefore not advised.

Doctors, nurses, and other staff who care for patients with *C. difficile* will wear gloves and aprons when attending to them. This will help prevent the spread of infection to other patients.

Your 5 moments for HAND HYGIENE



From *Guide to Implementation of the World Health Organisation's Multimodal Hand Hygiene Improvement Strategy* (revised August 2009)

Cleaning must be of a very high standard because the bacteria can remain in the environment for long periods.

What about my visitors?

There is no need for visitors to wear gloves and aprons unless they are helping with your care, such as washing you or helping you with meals.

All visitors should wash their hands with soap and water in the nearest sink to the bed, before and after visiting you.

There is no risk to healthy family and other visitors (including pregnant women and children), as long they wash their hands. ►

Are there any special precautions when I leave hospital?

Normal procedures of routine hand washing and cleaning of the home environment are all that are needed.

Wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before handling food.

Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household detergent.

If you still have *C. difficile* diarrhoea, any soiled clothes, bedding and towels etc should be washed separately in a washing machine at the highest temperature possible for that fabric.

Once your diarrhoea has resolved there is no need to separate items. ●

For more information:

- ask your hospital doctor or nurse
- ask your GP or Practice Nurse
- look on NHS Choices www.nhs.uk
- or Health Protection Agency www.hpa.org.uk or Public Health England www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

Surrey & Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust
Trust Headquarters, East Surrey Hospital,
Canada Avenue, Redhill, Surrey RH1 5RH
Telephone: **01737 768511**
Web: www.surreyandsussex.nhs.uk

The Patient Advice & Liaison Service can be contacted on telephone **01737 231958**.

This leaflet can be provided in other languages and formats upon request. Please telephone 01737 231958 or email pals@sash.nhs.uk

Esta informação está disponível em outros idiomas e formatos, incluindo letras maiores. Para auxílio contactar 01737 231958.

我們可以用其他語言和格式來提供這些資料，包括大字體。欲獲得協助，請致電 01737 231958

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Surrey and Sussex 
Healthcare NHS Trust

Clostridium difficile

information for patients,
carers, relatives and visitors



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Delivering excellent, accessible healthcare