

## Summary

- Cdiff is a common gut bacterium
- In some vulnerable patients it causes watery diarrhoea
- It can be treated with antibiotics
- Precautions will be taken to prevent it spreading to other vulnerable patients

Should you require further information please speak to the nurse-in-charge.

## Key reference sources and further information

- [www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/infectious-diseases](http://www.gov.uk/topic/health-protection/infectious-diseases)

## Contact details

### The Infection Control Team

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**Telephone:** 01483 571122

Royal Surrey County Hospital (RSCH) NHS Foundation Trust fully subscribes to the National Patient Safety Agency (NPSA) *Being Open* best practice framework, November 2010.

### PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located right as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

**Telephone:** 01483 402757

**Email:** [rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net](mailto:rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net)

**Opening hours:** 9.00am–4.00pm  
Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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## Clostridium Difficile Infection



Infection Control Department

## What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile, or Cdiff, is a spore-forming bacterium that is commonly found in the human gut, particularly in babies and young children. The bacterium lives harmlessly without causing any problems. In adults, symptoms of mild to severe diarrhoea may develop when the normal gut bacteria is disturbed. This may occur when an individual receives repeated or specific antibiotic therapy for treatment of another infection, e.g. chest infection. Formation of spores means this bacterium can survive in the environment for long periods of time.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Watery diarrhoea
- Abdominal cramps / pain
- Diarrhoea with blood in it
- Raised temperature

## How long does the infection last?

This will vary from one person to another, but it may last from a matter of days to a few weeks.

## Can it be treated?

Yes, there are specific antibiotics to treat the infection, which the doctor may prescribe. If possible, the antibiotic that caused the problem will be stopped.

## How is it spread?

- Through direct contact with the diarrhoea
- Indirectly through contact with a contaminated environment or contaminated equipment, e.g. bedpans

Hand washing (with soap and water) after using the toilet and before eating and drinking will reduce the risk of spread.

## Who's at risk of Cdiff infection?

- Patients who are already ill and vulnerable to infection
- Patients who are on repeated or certain types of antibiotics
- People over the age of 65 years

**It is not a risk to healthy individuals.**

## What happens when a patient is found to have or is thought to have Cdiff?

Patients who are known or suspected to have Cdiff will be nursed in a single room to prevent spread of the infection to other vulnerable patients on the ward/unit.

Healthcare professionals will also take other precautions to prevent spread to other patients. For example, they may use disposable gloves and aprons.

Monitoring of your fluid intake and symptoms of diarrhoea will also be undertaken.

## Do visitors have to wear disposable gloves and aprons?

Visitors are not routinely required to wear disposable gloves and aprons when visiting a patient with Cdiff. However, it is recommended that before leaving the ward/unit hands are washed with soap and water.

## How long do patients with Cdiff have to remain in a single room?

Until the diarrhoea stops and no further diarrhoea is experienced for at least 48 hours.

## Will the infection delay discharge home?

If you are medically well and the doctors and nurses are happy for you to go home then having Cdiff will not delay discharge.

## How should clothes be washed?

Any clothes soiled with diarrhoea should be washed on a hot wash cycle in a washing machine, i.e. at least at 60°C, using a biological washing powder/liquid. For clothes that cannot withstand such a temperature, use suitable fabric bleach and wash at 40°C. Laundry should be placed directly into the drum of the washing machine. Wash your hands after handling laundry.