

How should clothes be washed?

Laundry should be placed directly into the drum of the washing machine.

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.

Wash your hands after handling laundry.

What happens when I go home?

C. diff is not a problem for people who are healthy and there are no restrictions on you once your symptoms have resolved.

Whenever you attend a hospital or see another healthcare practitioner, you should inform them that you have had C. diff.

Summary

- C. diff is a common gut bacteria
- 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
- www.nhs.uk/conditions/c-difficile/

Contact details

Infection Control Team

Royal Surrey County Hospital
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Telephone: 01483 571122 **ext** 4580

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 on the right hand side 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

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm
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



Patient information leaflet

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile, or C. diff, is a spore-forming bacteria that is commonly found in the human gut. It can be found in healthy people, where it causes no symptoms (up to 3% of adults and 66% of babies) as it lives harmlessly without causing any problems.

C. diff causes disease when the normal bacteria in the gut are disadvantaged, usually when an individual receives repeated or specific antibiotic therapy for treatment of another infection, e.g. chest infection.

Formation of spores means this bacteria can survive in the environment for long periods of time.

What are the signs and symptoms?

- Watery or bloody diarrhoea several times a day
- Abdominal cramps/pain
- Loss of appetite
- Fever
- Feeling sick

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?

- Direct contact with diarrhoea
- Indirect contact with a contaminated environment or contaminated equipment, e.g. bedpans, toilets

How is the spread reduced?

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 C. diff infection?

Patients who:

- had stay in hospital or care home for a long time
- have been taking antibiotics that work against several types of bacteria or several different antibiotics at the same time, or those taking long-term antibiotics
- are over the age of 65 years
- have certain underlying conditions, including inflammatory bowel disease (IBD), cancer, or kidney disease
- have a weakened immune system
- are taking proton pump inhibitor (PPI)
- have had surgery on their digestive system

It is not a risk to healthy individuals.

What happens when a patient is found to have or is thought to have C. diff?

Patients who are known or suspected to have C. diff 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 C. diff. However, it is recommended that before leaving the ward/unit hands are washed with soap and water.

How long do patients with C. diff 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 to home?

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