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Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI)

What is *Clostridium Difficile* (*C. diff*)?

C. diff is one of the many types of bacteria that can be found in intestines/feces (bowel movement).

What is *C. difficile* Infection (CDI)?

C. diff can sometimes occur when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the *C. diff* (bad bacteria) to grow. When *C. diff* grows in the bowel, it produces toxins. These toxins can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. *C. difficile* Infection (CDI) is usually mild but sometimes can be severe. In severe cases, surgery may be needed, and in extreme cases CDI may cause death. CDI is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospitals or long-term care homes.

The main symptoms of CDI are:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Loss of appetite

How do people get CDI?

CDI usually occurs during or after the use of antibiotics. Advanced age, presence of other serious illness and poor overall health may increase the risk of severe disease. In hospitals, healthcare providers can also spread these bacteria if they do not wash their hands prior to caring for their patients and/or handling contaminated patient care equipment.

How Will Your Doctor Know That You Have CDI?

If you have symptoms of CDI, your doctor will ask for a sample of your watery stool. The laboratory will test the stool to see if *C. diff* toxins are present.

How is CDI Treated?

Treatment depends on how sick you are. People with mild symptoms may not need treatment. For more severe disease, antibiotics are required.

How Does CDI Spread?

When a person has CDI, the bacteria in the stool can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, handles, bedpans, or commode chairs. When touching these items our hands can become contaminated. If we then touch our mouth without washing our hands, we can become infected. Our soiled hands can also spread the bacteria to other surfaces.

By always washing your hands and practicing good hygiene, you can greatly reduce your chances of picking up **any** bacteria – not just *C. difficile*.

How to Prevent Spread?

Patient safety is very important. Our goal is to identify patients with CDI quickly and institute infection control measures accordingly thereby preventing potential transmission. If you are in the hospital and have *C. diff* diarrhea, you will be placed on Contact Precautions and moved to a private room. Your activities outside the room may be restricted. All health care staff who enter your room will wear a gown and gloves. Everyone **MUST** clean their hands when leaving your room. Ask your visitors to check in at the nursing station if they have not done so already.

Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the bathroom and before eating. Cleaning our hands is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of C. difficile and other germs. As well, a thorough cleaning of your room and equipment will be done to prevent spread of the infection.

What Should I Do at Home?

Healthy people like your family and friends who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk for getting CDI.

1. Cleaning the house

- Use an all-purpose household cleaner or diluted household bleach. Follow the directions on the label, and:
- Wipe surfaces starting from the cleanest areas and moving towards the dirtiest areas
- Wet the surface well and clean using good friction
- Allow the surface to air dry
- Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with feces such as the toilet and sink. Remove any visible feces, and then clean as described above

2. Cleaning clothes/other fabric

- Wash clothes/fabric separately if they are heavily soiled with feces:
- Rinse off feces
- Clean in a hot water cycle with soap
- Dry items in the dryer on high heat, if possible
- Dry clean where appropriate

3. Cleaning dishes

- Regular cleaning – use the dishwasher or clean by hand with soap and water

4. Hand Hygiene

- Practicing good hand hygiene is just as important at home as it is in the healthcare setting
- Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds with soap and water:
 - After using the toilet
 - After touching dirty surfaces
 - Before eating
 - Before preparing meals

It is very important that you take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor. If you have questions about your antibiotics, you should ask your doctor and/or pharmacist. You should not use any drugs from the drugstore that will stop your diarrhea (e.g. Imodium). If diarrhea persists or comes back, contact your doctor.

For more information on Clostridium difficile, visit
<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/ccom/cdi/about.aspx#2>

http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PIDAC-IPC_Annex_C_Testing_SurveillanceManage_C_difficile_2013.pdf

tradition is cherished, change is welcomed