

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT CLOSTRIDIoidES DIFFICILE INFECTION

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What Is *Clostridioides difficile* Infection?

Clostridioides difficile, or *C diff*, is a type of bacteria that causes an infection in your stomach or intestines. This infection is common in people who are in hospitals or nursing homes. There are 2 ways you can get *C diff*:

- By touching something with *C diff* bacteria on it, such as a counter, a doorknob, or someone who hasn't washed his or her hands. If you get bacteria on your hands and then touch your mouth, eyes, or nose, you could get a *C diff* infection.
- By taking antibiotic medicines. Bacteria live in your stomach and intestines all the time. When you take antibiotics, they kill the bad bacteria that can harm you as well as other "good" bacteria, and this can cause changes in your gut that can make *C diff* grow uncontrollably.

What Are the Symptoms?

- Diarrhea or watery stools
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Fever

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask about your health, health history, and symptoms.
- You might be asked to give a sample of your stool for testing.
- In some cases, your doctor might need to check your colon, which is a part of your intestines. This is done through a test called a colonoscopy or a sigmoidoscopy. These tests use a flexible tube to look at your colon.
- You might get imaging tests, like a CT scan, of your colon.

How Is It Treated?

- Your doctor might have you stop taking antibiotic medicines if you are taking them.
- Your doctor might prescribe a different antibiotic to treat the *C diff* bacteria.



- If you have a severe infection, you may need to be hospitalized.
- If *C diff* has damaged your colon, you might need surgery to repair it.
- If your *C diff* has been treated but keeps coming back, you might need a stool transplant. This is when stool from a healthy person is transferred to your colon to help balance the bacteria in your intestines.

How Can I Prevent It?

- Take antibiotics only when you really need them. Never take medicine that is not prescribed for you.
- If you are helping to take care of someone who might have *C diff*, wash your hands with soap and water often. Washing with soap and water is better at getting rid of *C diff* than using hand sanitizer.

Questions for Your Doctor

- If taking antibiotics causes *C diff*, why does taking more treat it?
- How long will it take for me to feel better?
- Will my friends or family members get *C diff*?
- How can I make sure I don't get *C diff* again?
- Should I take probiotics? Where can I get them?
- Do I have to eat a special diet?
- When will I stop being contagious?

For More Information



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www.acponline.org/system/files/documents/practice-resources/patient-resources/c-diff.pdf

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cdiff/cdiff_infect.html