



***Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) Fact Sheet for Clients, Household Members & Visitors**

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile (C. *difficile* or C. *diff*) is a germ that causes diarrhea. It can also cause more serious illness like colitis (inflammation of the gut).

Did you know?

In the developed world C. *diff* is one of the most common diarrheal infections in hospitals and long term care facilities.

Who is at risk of getting a C. diff infection?

The elderly are at risk. People being treated with antibiotics, cancer drugs or certain stomach medications are also at risk.

Did you know?

Treatment with antibiotics changes the normal levels of good bacteria found in the gut.

How do people get C. diff?

C. *diff* is found in stool and if a person comes into contact with stool, or something containing traces of stool, the germ can be passed on. Unwashed hands, surfaces contaminated with stool and touching your face or mouth without cleaning your hands are ways to pass C. *diff* on to others.

Did you know?

People can also get C. *diff* if they have been taking certain antibiotics or cancer drugs for a long period of time. Long-term use of these drugs can decrease normal levels of 'good' bacteria in the gut which allows C. *diff* to grow and multiply.

How can you tell if you may have C. diff? What are the symptoms?

Symptoms may include:

- the sudden start of watery diarrhea (when the stool takes the shape of the container holding it)
- fever
- losing your appetite
- nausea
- stomach pain and/or tenderness

How serious is C. diff?

The primary symptom of C. *diff* is diarrhea.

Diarrhea can lead to serious complications, including dehydration, especially in the elderly or anyone who is seriously ill. In rare cases, C. *diff* can be fatal

How do you treat C. diff?

Mild cases may not require medical treatment and will clear up on their own. Remember to keep well hydrated. More severe cases may require medication and sometimes even surgery.

Once you have it, how can you prevent the spread of C. diff?

Often the diarrhea will have improved or be gone completely before you go home. This makes giving C. *diff* to other people much less likely.



Feuille de renseignements sur le *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) à l'intention des clients, des membres du ménage et des visiteurs

Qu'est-ce que le *Clostridium difficile*?

Le *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) est un germe qui cause la diarrhée. Il peut aussi causer des maladies plus graves comme la colite (inflammation de l'intestin).

Le saviez-vous?

Dans les pays développés, le *C. difficile* est l'une des infections diarrhéiques les plus courantes dans les hôpitaux et les établissements de soins à long terme.

Qui est à risque de contracter une infection au *C. difficile*?

Les personnes âgées sont à risque, de même que celles qui prennent des antibiotiques, des médicaments contre le cancer ou certains médicaments pour l'estomac.

Le saviez-vous?

La prise d'antibiotiques modifie la quantité normale de bonnes bactéries dans l'intestin.

Comment contracte-t-on une infection au *C. difficile*?

Le *C. difficile* se trouve dans les selles et si une personne entre en contact avec des selles, ou avec quelque chose qui contient des traces de selles, le germe peut être transmis. Les mains non lavées, les surfaces contaminées par des selles, et le fait de se toucher le visage ou la bouche sans se laver les mains constituent des risques de transmettre le *C. difficile* aux autres.

Le saviez-vous?

On peut aussi contracter une infection au *C. difficile* si on prend certains antibiotiques ou certains médicaments contre le cancer pendant une longue période. La prise prolongée de ces médicaments peut réduire la quantité normale de « bonnes » bactéries dans l'intestin, ce qui permet au *C. difficile* de proliférer.

Comment savoir si on est atteint d'une infection au *C. difficile*? Quels sont les symptômes?

Les symptômes peuvent comprendre ce qui suit :

- soudaine diarrhée liquide (quand les selles prennent la forme du contenant dans lequel on les met);
- fièvre;
- perte d'appétit;
- nausée;
- douleur ou sensibilité à l'estomac.

Quelle est la gravité d'une infection au *C. difficile*?

Le principal symptôme d'une infection au *C. difficile* est la diarrhée.

La diarrhée peut mener à de graves complications, notamment la déshydratation, surtout chez les personnes âgées et toute personne gravement malade. Dans de rares cas, le *C. difficile* peut même être fatal.

Comment traite-t-on les infections au *C. difficile*?

Les infections légères peuvent se résorber d'elles-mêmes sans traitement médical. Il faut penser à bien s'hydrater. Les cas plus graves peuvent nécessiter une médication, voire une chirurgie.

Comment prévenir la propagation du *C. difficile* si on en est atteint?

Souvent, la diarrhée aura diminué ou complètement cessé avant votre retour à la maison. Il y a donc moins de risques que vous transmettiez le *C. difficile* à quelqu'un d'autre.



How can you reduce the chance you'll spread *C. diff*?

- Wash your hands often. Be sure to wash them after going to the bathroom and before you prepare food.
- Make sure people who live with you or visit with you wash their hands often.
- If you did not see your health care provider clean their hands, ask them to.
- If you get a prescription to treat *C. diff*, take the medicine exactly as prescribed.
- Make sure you take the full dose. Do not stop taking the medicine before you run out.
- If you get diarrhea again, or if your diarrhea gets worse after you get home, tell your doctor immediately.
- Typical things you do around your home – cleaning, doing laundry, and washing dishes – do not need to be done any differently.

Is there anything else that needs to be done?

In some cases; when a person is incontinent, if their stools cannot be contained, or if a person contaminates their environment, additional precautions may become necessary.

What are the Additional Precautions?

Additional Precautions may include:

- being placed in a private room;
- health-care providers may wear gloves and gowns when caring for the client and touching equipment or surfaces in the room;
- everyone who enters or leaves the room cleans their hands.

What do visitors need to be mindful of?

Visitors are welcome, provided they clean their hands before going into a person's room. You can be in close contact with the person. Be sure to clean your hands before you go into the room and right after leaving the space.

If you have *C. diff* how can you help?

- Remind everyone – including staff and visitors - to clean their hands.
- Wash your hands often. Be sure to wash your hands after using the bathroom.
- Tell your health-care workers if you have diarrhea or if your symptoms change.

For more info and further resources, please visit www.wrha.mb.ca/ipc.

Additional *C. difficile* resources

Public Health Agency of Canada (2011, July) Fact Sheet - *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*). Available at: [Fact Sheet – Clostridium difficile \(C. difficile\) - Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

Frequently asked questions about “Clostridium difficile” – Centers for Disease Control (CDC) accessed November 2013. Available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cdiff/Cdiff-patient.html>

