

Infection Prevention & Control Fact Sheet

Information for the General Public

CLOSTRIDIODES DIFFICILE (*C. difficile*)

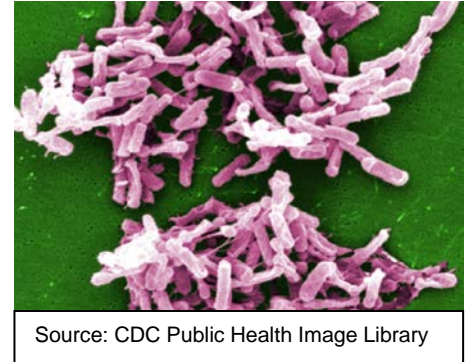
What is *C. difficile*?

It is a germ that causes diarrhea.
It can lead to serious inflammation and damage to the bowel (gut).

How do you get *C. difficile*?

When normal gut flora (good germs) is decreased, *C. difficile* can grow and multiply which may lead to an infection.

People who are at higher risk include: the elderly, those with severe underlying illness and people taking certain antibiotics or chemotherapies.



How is *C. difficile* diagnosed?

Using a test of your stool when you are having symptoms which *may* include loose watery stool, abdominal (belly) pain, fever, mucous or blood in the stool, dehydration, and a different kind of odor to the stool.

I/my family member has C. difficile, now what?

Clean hands often with soap and water or alcohol based hand rub (ABHR). Important times are:

- **before** eating, preparing, or serving food.
- **after** using the toilet, helping someone else using the toilet or after changing a dirty brief/diaper.

In hospital:

If there is an outbreak of *C. difficile* you may be asked to use only soap and water to clean your hands.

At home:

Clean the bathroom more often, focus on the toilet flush handle or button, the sink, and taps. Wipe surfaces thoroughly.

Consider using bleach based products to clean at home, follow the product instructions carefully.

Replace hand towels often or use disposable paper towels.

I don't want C. difficile, what can I do?

If you are higher risk of getting *C. difficile* avoid others with the infection.

Clean hands with often with soap and water or ABHR:

- **before** eating, preparing, or serving food.
- **after** using the toilet.
- **after** helping someone else using the toilet.
- **after** changing a dirty brief/diaper.

For caregivers that are helping with direct care for someone with C. difficile, frequent hand cleaning is very important.

In hospital or long term care settings personal protective equipment (PPE), such as gloves and gown, *may* be needed. If you don't know if you should be wearing PPE, check with a member of the healthcare team taking care of your loved one/the person you are visiting. A member of team will teach you how to put the PPE on and take it off properly. If you have questions or need help with your PPE, please ask a member of the healthcare team.