

# Clostridium difficile

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## What is it?

- Clostridium difficile, also known as C.difficile or C.diff is a bacteria.
- It is one of the many types of bacteria that is found in your bowel and poop (stool).
- People can carry C.difficile in their bowel without causing diarrhea.
- Sometimes C.difficile can cause an infection in your bowel. C.difficile illness is usually mild but can cause severe diarrhea.
- You can get C.difficile when the antibiotics you are taking kill off the good germs in your bowel and allow C.difficile to grow.
- Being elderly, a weakened immune system, or frequent antibiotic use may increase your chances of getting C.difficile.
- Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are at a very low risk of getting diarrhea from C.difficile.
- Symptoms include:
  - nausea or feeling sick to your stomach
  - fever
  - abdominal pain or tenderness
  - frequent watery diarrhea
  - decreased interest in food
  - poop often described as having a “horse barn odour”

## How is it spread?

- C.difficile can spread on things like toilets, flush handles, bedpans and commodes.
- When you touch these items, your hands can pick up C.difficile.
- If you do not clean your hands and then you touch your mouth with your hands, you can get C.difficile in your mouth which then spreads to your bowel.
- Your hands can also spread C.difficile to other things where they can live for a long time if the item is not cleaned well.

## Is there treatment for it?

- C.difficile is usually treated by stopping the current antibiotic.
- Mild diarrhea may stop as soon as the current antibiotic(s) are no longer taken.
- You may be started on a new antibiotic that works to kill C.difficile.
- Do not take any medication used to stop diarrhea such as Immodium™ or Kaopectate™.
- If your diarrhea continues or comes back, see a doctor right away.

## What can be done to prevent the spread of it?

- Cleaning your hands with hand sanitizer or soap and water is the best way to prevent the spread of C.difficile.
- If you are in the hospital, you will be put in Contact Precautions.
- When you go home:
  - Clean your hands well and often.
  - It is very important to keep the bathroom and kitchen clean.
  - Use diluted bleach (1 part bleach to 10 parts water) or a bleach product especially on the toilet area.
  - Wet the surface such as a toilet seat well with the diluted bleach, scrub clean and air dry.
- **Ask your nurse for the handout on “Going Home with C. difficile” before you leave the hospital.**

## For further information visit:

Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/cdiff-eng.php>

**Stop the spread of germs and infection.  
Clean your hands.**

