

Clostridium difficile (*C. diff*)

What is *C. diff*?

- *C. diff* is a bacterium that produces a toxin and causes inflammation of the colon or colitis.
- The elderly or people with medical conditions may get it when taking antibiotics for other illnesses.

What are the symptoms?

- Symptoms include watery diarrhea (at least 3 per day for 2 or more days), fever, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain, and tenderness.

How does *C. diff* spread?

- *C. diff* is in infected person's stool and can live for a long time on contaminated surfaces.
- Person-to-person: In healthcare settings, when infected healthcare workers and visitors do not wash their hands correctly or often enough.
- Surface-to person: Any surface, device, object, or material (e.g., counters, knobs, or remote controls) contaminated with infected stool not visible to the eye.

Can *C. diff* be treated?

- Symptoms may stop within 2-3 days of stopping antibiotics used for the other illness.
- Your healthcare provider can prescribe a different antibiotic.
- In severe cases, the patient may need surgery to remove infected area of intestines.

How do I stop the spread?

- All healthcare providers should wash their hands with soap and water before and after each patient. If you do not see your provider clean their hands, ask them to do so.
- Clean all healthcare surfaces, like hospital rooms and medical equipment, with a 1:10 bleach-to-water solution.
- Healthcare providers should use Contact Precautions with *C. diff* patients by:
 - Providing a single-bed or private hospital room when possible
 - Using gloves, wearing a gown, and asking visitors to use gloves and gowns
 - Throwing gloves and gowns away when leaving each hospital room
 - Asking the patient to stay in their hospital room
 - Giving antibiotics only when necessary
- When discharged from hospital:
 - Take medicines prescribed exactly as your provider tells you
 - Wash your hands (running water and soap for 20 seconds) often, especially after the bathroom and before preparing food. Also, ask family to wash their hands often
 - Call doctor immediately, if you develop symptoms

Where can I find more information?

Go to cdc.gov and type *C. diff* in SEARCH box.



Alabama Department of Public Health

Infectious Diseases & Outbreaks Division, 201 Monroe St, Montgomery, AL 36104

800-338-8374 www.alabamapublichealth.gov/infectiousdiseases 11/01/2017