



Patient Information

Clostridioides Difficile (C.Diff)

(Previously Clostridium Difficile)

What is Clostridioides Difficile?

- It is a bacterium (bacteria) that normally lives in the intestine (gut) of up to 3% of healthy adults
- This in certain circumstances may cause frequent and infective diarrhoea
- It is also referred to as C.diff or C.difficile

Who is most at risk?

- The elderly (over 65 age group)
- Patients who have a reduced immunity
- Patients who are taking antibiotics that may alter the “normal” gut flora as this increases the risk of developing C.diff diarrhoea

How does it spread?

- It is possible for the infection to spread from person to person because those suffering from C.diff shed spores in their faeces
- These spores can survive for a time in the environment and can be transported on the hands of those who have direct contact with infected patients or with environmental surfaces such as floors, bedpans and toilets contaminated with C.diff

How is it identified?

By taking a diarrhoeal stool specimen and sending it to the Laboratory for testing. The Laboratory then looks for the toxins that are produced by the C.diff bacteria. This result takes 24 hours to return from the Laboratory.

Different strains (types)

There are many different strains (types) of C.diff of which strain 027 is one and can sometimes produce more toxins than most and can be associated with more severe disease.

What problems does C.diff cause?

Some strains of C.diff produce toxins (poisons) and these can cause diarrhoea. This can range from mild diarrhoea to a very severe illness that can cause ulceration and



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bleeding of the intestines (colitis). Other symptoms can include fever, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain/tenderness.

What happens if patients are diagnosed with C.diff?

- In line with the Great Western Hospital isolation policy whenever possible patients will be placed into single side rooms with the door shut
- Patients should receive an explanation regarding why they are in isolation and an advice leaflet will be given by the ward staff
- Patients will be allocated a toilet or commode specifically for their use, to help prevent the spread to other patients
- Patients must make sure that hands are washed well with soap and water after using the toilet and before meals. (Hand wipes are available so please ask)
- Staff will wear apron and gloves to care for you and they will wash their hands with soap and water after giving this care. This will also prevent the spread of the infection
- Your room will be cleaned twice a day with a chlorine-based (bleach) product and again this will help to prevent the spread of the infection

How is it treated?

- Where possible, the antibiotics that may have contributed to the disease will be stopped
- A course of antibiotics, which are effective against the C.diff, will be given for 10 days
- The medical team will check that adequate fluids are being taken

Can I have visitors?

- Yes as C.diff does not normally present a risk to the general public
- Visitors will be asked to report to the nurse in charge before visiting and to wash their hands with soap and water on entering and leaving the isolation room/bay
- Visitors will also be asked to use the alcohol gel on entering and leaving the ward
- Visitors will not require gloves and aprons, unless they are helping you with your personal care
- If there are concerns about someone visiting then advice should be sought from the nursing staff

Will any of my treatment be delayed?

- Where possible investigation (tests) and treatment will continue with staff taking the necessary precautions
- Non-urgent investigations may be delayed if you are experiencing severe diarrhoea
- Transfers to other wards will be reduced to help contain the infection, until you are well again



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Can my washing be sent home?

Yes – laundry can still be taken home. However, wash soiled/dirty laundry separately (at 60°C if the fabric will withstand this temperature).

Can I go home with C.diff?

You would normally wait until the diarrhoea has settled and your medical team are satisfied that you are fit for discharge.

Can it come back?

Yes - some patients may suffer a relapse of diarrhoea. Please contact your General Practitioner (GP) if you develop diarrhoea after you have been discharged home.

Can I get further information?

Yes – it can be obtained from:

- Ward based infection control link networker or named nurse
- Your medical team or General Practitioner (GP)
- Clostridioides difficile guidance data and analysis – www.gov.uk
- The NHS website www.nhs.uk

Thank you for your co-operation.

This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email gwh.pals@nhs.net

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