

## Clostridium Difficile - Fact Sheet

### **What is Clostridium difficile?**

*Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) is a bacteria (germ) that lives in your bowel, often without causing any problem. However, sometimes it can cause diarrhoea (loose stools) and more serious conditions such as colitis (inflammation of the bowel).

### **What are the symptoms of C. difficile diarrhoea?**

- Watery diarrhoea containing blood and mucous
- Fever
- Nausea
- You don't feel like eating or drinking
- Stomach pain/tenderness

### **Who gets C. difficile diarrhoea?**

People who have medical conditions or illnesses requiring the use of antibiotics are at most risk for becoming unwell e.g. patients in hospital.

If *C. difficile* is suspected as a cause of your diarrhoea, a sample will be sent to the laboratory for testing.

### **What is the treatment?**

Sometimes the diarrhoea may improve simply by stopping the original antibiotic that you were on. Otherwise a course of antibiotics may be needed to treat the *C. difficile* itself.

It is possible that diarrhoea may return after stopping treatment. Sometimes more than one course of antibiotics is needed.

### **Can C. difficile be spread?**

It can be spread to other patients on hands, surfaces and equipment or from contaminated common areas such as toilet facilities.

### **How can I prevent the spread of C. difficile?**

While in hospital and possibly infectious you will be placed into Contact Precautions a type of isolation management. For further information on isolation please read the 'Fact Sheet - Why am I in Isolation?'

Patients in isolation are usually asked to stay in their room and not share bathroom facilities with other patients. Everyone who comes into your room must wash their hands when they leave.

Washing your hands is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of this germ.

### **What should I do at home?**

Healthy people, such as your family and friends who are not taking antibiotics are at a very low risk of getting *C. difficile* diarrhoea.

- **Hand hygiene:** clean your hands thoroughly, for at least 20-40 seconds, especially after using the toilet and before preparing or eating meals.
- **Housekeeping:** clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with your normal household detergent/disinfectant.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

*This fact sheet provides basic general information only and is to be used as a quick guide, not as a complete resource on the subject. If you have any further questions, ask your own doctor, local health unit or health care worker.*