

Top tips to prevent C.diff spreading

Healthy people are not usually at risk of getting C. diff and can safely visit clients with C. diff. If you are visiting, you should:

- always wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water when you enter and leave care-home areas;
- not bring food into the care home;
- not eat at the bedside of the person you are visiting;
- not sit on beds;
- not visit other clients in the care home at the same time;
- avoid using clients' toilets;
- avoid moving around the care home; and
- not visit if you feel unwell.

What happens when I go home?

If you suffer from diarrhoea again after you have returned home, you should contact your GP. The care-home staff will have let your GP know that you have had a C.diff infection while you were in the care home as it may affect future prescribing of antibiotics or medicine for stomach complaints. You may have to give another sample of your faeces (bowel movements) to your GP.

We can give you this leaflet in different languages, in larger print, and in Braille (in English only). Please phone 0141 300 1100 for more information.

If you need any more information, please ask the staff in your care home for help.

Staff phone number:



Health
Protection
Scotland



Clostridium difficile infection

Information for clients and visitors of care homes

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (C. diff) is a germ (bacterium) that some people have naturally in the bowel. C. diff normally doesn't cause any problems in healthy people.

How do I get C. diff infection?

You can pick up C. diff from touching dirty surfaces or others who have the infection. The good bacteria in the gut normally protect us against infections caused by C. diff. However, if you are taking antibiotics to treat an infection or medicine for stomach complaints, these can kill or have an effect on both the good and bad bacteria. When this happens, C. diff can grow quickly and produce poisons (toxins) that can give you diarrhoea and fever. Elderly people and people who have certain medical procedures to the bowel may be more likely to get C. diff infections.

How do I know if I am infected with C. diff?

The symptoms of C. diff infection include mild to severe diarrhoea, fever and stomach pains. We will take a sample of your faeces (bowel movement) and send it to a laboratory to test for C. diff. The laboratory test usually takes one to two days.

How serious is the infection?

C. diff makes poisons that can cause swelling, soreness and damage to the inside lining of the bowel. How bad the infection is varies greatly.

In many cases the infection is mild and will only last a few days. Diarrhoea often clears away without any treatment for C. diff.

In some cases the effects are more serious, lasting for several weeks and it may be necessary to treat the infection. Symptoms of severe infection include diarrhoea with blood in it and stomach pain, which can make you feel very unwell.

How will I be treated if I get C. diff infection while I am in a care home?

If you have diarrhoea because you have a C. diff infection, you may be put in a single room or be given your own toilet or commode to prevent the infection spreading to other patients.

If you have been transferred from hospital to the care home, we may take precautions to stop infection spreading even if you are not showing any symptoms.

Your doctor may stop or change your antibiotics or medicine for stomach complaints due to you having C. diff.

How does C. diff spread in care homes?

C. diff is passed in the faeces of people who are infected. C. diff can survive for a long time in the surroundings, on any surface, in toilet areas, on clothing, sheets and furniture.

People can accidentally pick it up by touching dirty (contaminated) surfaces and then touching their mouth or eating. Health and social-care workers, visitors and clients can spread the infection to themselves and others by not washing their hands.

What are care homes doing to prevent C. diff infections?

When possible, we put clients with C. diff in a single room or care for them in certain areas of the care home. All health and social-care workers, as well as visitors and clients, must wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water, as alcohol-based hand-rubs do not work well against C. diff. Health and social-care workers should also wear gloves and aprons when they care for clients with C. diff. Areas where C. diff is present are disinfected with bleach solution as well as being cleaned normally.

What can I do to stop the spread of C. diff?

It is important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, especially after you use the toilet and before you eat.

