



Infection Prevention Control (IPC) Topic: *Clostridioides difficile* or *C. difficile*

Intro: *Clostridioides difficile* or *C. difficile* is a bacterium that causes inflammation of the intestines and causes diarrhea.⁶ Any person can become sick with C-diff, although there are several factors that can put a person at risk. Most cases of *C. diff* occur when you've been taking antibiotics or not long after you've finished taking antibiotics.

There are other risk factors:

- Being 65 or older.
- Recent stay at a hospital or nursing home.
- A weakened immune system, such as people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or organ transplant patients taking immunosuppressive drugs.
- Previous infection with *C. diff* or known exposure to the germs.⁶

What is the risk?^{5,7,4} Most gut bacteria don't cause problems in healthy people. The intestinal system is filled with healthy bacteria and yeast. Having a healthy GI system is important for a healthy immune system. Common germs in the gut include *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), *Klebsiella*, *Clostridioides difficile* (*C. difficile* [*C. diff*]), and *Candida*, a type of yeast.⁴ These germs live in the intestines, they're in our feces, or our stool. These germs travel easily in stool from the gut reservoir to other places.⁸ Germs in the stool can spread by our hands or by things we touch, like medical devices and make people sick.

Highlights:

Symptoms:^{6,9}

- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Stomach tenderness or pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea

How C-diff can spread^{5,7,8}

- *C. diff* germs are carried from person to person in fecal matter.
- If someone with *C. diff* (or caring for someone with *C. diff*) doesn't clean their hands with soap and water after using the bathroom, they can spread the germs to people and things they touch.
 - This includes devices and surfaces that can serve as reservoirs, such as commodes, sink faucets, door handles, and toilet flushers.

- *C. diff* can also live on people's skin. People who touch an infected person's skin can pick up the germs on their hands. Taking a shower with soap and water can reduce the *C. diff* on your skin and lessen the chance of it spreading.

Prevention^{8,9,10}

- Use Contact Precautions to prevent *C. diff* from spreading to other patients.
 - Contact precautions are gown and gloves. *C. difficile* germs are hard to remove from your hands; gloves help reduce hand contamination.
 - Be sure that staff educate visitors of contact precautions and cleaning hands.
- Clean hands with soap and water before and after caring for every patient. You can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer before patient or resident care. Use gloves during care and, wash your hands thoroughly after care. This can prevent *C. diff* and other germs from being passed from one patient to another on their hands.
 - Cleaning and disinfecting surfaces in rooms where *C. diff* patients are treated with EPA-approved, spore-killing disinfectant (see list K)
 - No shared equipment should be done between *C. diff* patients and others.
- Whenever possible, patients with *C. diff* will have a single room or share a room only with someone else who also has *C. diff*.
- Staff need to focus on cleaning regularly touched surface when in patient's room. These include but are not limited to toilet flushers, phones, keyboards, overbed tables.
- Be antibiotic aware (using antibiotics appropriately).

Summary:

Healthcare workers can prevent clostridium difficile by initiating contact precautions, cleaning hands, and using appropriate cleaners and disinfectants.

For more information on recognizing risk for C-diff and related Project Firstline materials, see References below:

1. [Hand Hygiene in Healthcare Settings | CDC](#)
2. [Germs lives on the skin \(cdc.gov\)](#)
3. [Print Materials and Job Aids from Project Firstline | Infection Control | CDC](#)
4. [Germs live in "the gut" \(cdc.gov\)](#)
5. [Germs can live on devices \(cdc.gov\)](#)
6. [What is C. diff? | CDC](#)
7. [Body Reservoirs \(cdc.gov\)](#)
8. [Prevent the Spread of C. diff | CDC](#)
9. [FAQ's about Clostridium Difficile \(cdc.gov\)](#)
10. [C. diff Fact Sheet \(cdc.gov\)](#)
11. [FAQs for Clinicians about C. diff | CDC](#)