

What is Clostridium difficile (C. difficile)?

Clostridium difficile (C. difficile) is a spore-forming bacterium that can be found in some people as part of the normal bacteria found in their intestine. Sometimes, when someone is on antibiotics for a long time, the normal bacteria of the intestine can become imbalanced and this causes C. difficile to grow and produce toxins. These toxins can damage the lining of the bowel and cause diarrhea.

What are the symptoms of C. difficile?

The main symptoms of C. difficile are:

- Watery diarrhea,
- Fever,
- Abdominal pain or tenderness,
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea.

An infection with C. difficile can have a range of symptoms from no symptoms at all to diarrhea sometimes resulting in severe inflammation of the bowel, which can be fatal.

How do you get C. difficile and how is it spread?

People with C. difficile infections carry the bacteria in their intestines and in their feces. It can spread to others when they forget to wash their hands after using the washroom. Others can then become ill by touching contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks or other items and then touching their mouths or eating food without washing their hands. C. difficile is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

Keep hands clean!

The best way to prevent C. difficile (and other infections) from spreading to others is by cleaning your hands.

Clean hands often:

- If they are dirty
- Before preparing or eating food
- After blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom
- After contact with body fluids
- After changing a bandage

Remember!

- Use soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer
- If you can see dirt on your hands alcohol based hand sanitizers won't work. You must wash with soap and water.

Want more info?

Check out IPAC Canada

(Infection Prevention and Control Canada)

<https://ipac-canada.org/antibiotic-resistant-organism-resources>

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/fact-sheet-clostridium-difficile-difficile.html>