

**What is *Clostridium difficile*?**

*Clostridium difficile* is a bacteria that causes diarrhea and more serious conditions by producing a toxin after antibiotics have killed off other organisms in the gut.

**What are the symptoms of *Clostridium difficile*?**

Infection with *Clostridium difficile* may cause no symptoms, mild symptoms, or severe watery diarrhea and may result in death.

**How is *Clostridium difficile* spread?**

Once a person has *Clostridium difficile*, it can be spread to others by contact with contaminated environment or unwashed hands.

**Who gets *Clostridium difficile* infection?**

Anyone can get *Clostridium difficile*, but people who have recently received long term; multiple antibiotics are most likely to get diarrhea caused by *Clostridium difficile*.

**How is *Clostridium difficile* diagnosed?**

In people with symptoms, a test can be done on feces (stool) to detect the bacteria. If found, further testing should be done to make sure that *Clostridium difficile* is producing the toxin and if it is causing disease.

**How long is a person infectious?**

An infected person can spread the bacteria as long as the bacteria is passed in the stool.

**What is the treatment for *Clostridium difficile*?**

The first treatment is to discontinue or change the antibiotic the person is taking. Patients should be watched for dehydration and electrolyte imbalance following prolonged bouts of diarrhea. Antidiarrheal medicines such as Lomotil® or Imodium® have been shown to increase the severity of symptoms and should **NOT** be taken.

If the diarrhea worsens or fails to improve within 48 hours, the doctor may choose to treat it with a different medication.

**Can a person get *Clostridium difficile* again?**

Yes.

**Do infected people need to be excluded from school, work, or child care?**

People are not routinely excluded from work, school, or child care. Anyone with food-handling responsibilities should not work until diarrhea has ceased. Child care attendees should not attend until no loose stools have occurred for at least 24 hours.

**What can be done to help prevent the spread of *Clostridium difficile*?**

Antibiotics should be taken only when necessary and as ordered by the doctor. Good hand washing practices and keeping the environment clean are proven to help prevent the spread of this disease.