

For more information

You can find out more about Clostridium difficile by:

- Asking your community hospital nursing staff or doctor
- Asking your GP or practice nurse.

Infection control

This leaflet is one in a series about infection control. Others in the series are:

- Preventing and controlling healthcare associated infections
- MRSA
- Norovirus

Your experiences

CSH Surrey is committed to putting people first and continually improving services through listening and responding to feedback. To share your experiences, please:

Call: 01306 646 223

Email: CSH.Feedback@nhs.net

Or write to the Governance Office address below.

Large print, audio format or another language

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or email CSH.@nhs.net

to receive this information in large print, audio format or another language.

General enquiries

Visit www.cshsurrey.co.uk for information and contact details for all other CSH Surrey services.

A heart in the community

CSH Surrey, proud to be part of the CSH Group. As a social enterprise, CSH makes profit to benefit local communities and to enhance its health and care services.



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Clostridium difficile

Information for patients,
carers and relatives

Better healthcare together

CSH Surrey, providing NHS community nursing and therapy services in the homes, schools, clinics and hospitals in the heart of Surrey since 2006.

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile is one of the many bacteria (germs) that are found in the gut / bowel. About three per cent of healthy adults in the community carry C. difficile in their bowel. It usually lives there harmlessly.

Sometimes, however, having antibiotics can affect the normal balance of bacteria in the bowel.

If this happens, C. difficile may have a chance to multiply and cause symptoms (infection).

How would a C. difficile infection affect me?

The symptoms of C. difficile infection can vary; some people have no symptoms, while others will notice diarrhoea of varying severity, abdominal (tummy) pain or tenderness, nausea (feeling sick) and sometimes a high temperature.

How is C. difficile identified?

Our nurses will ask patients with recognised symptoms of C. difficile to provide a sample of faeces which will be sent to the laboratory to be examined.

How are patients with Clostridium infection cared for?

A patient with C. difficile infection will be nursed in a side room to prevent the bacteria spreading to other patients on the ward.

How is it treated?

Fortunately most patients only develop mild diarrhoea that stops once the antibiotics have stopped. Adequate fluid intake is also important.

A specific medicine is sometimes required and this can be taken by mouth. In some patients diarrhoea may return in which case a further course of medicine is required.

As soon as your diarrhoea stops you will no longer need to be nursed separately.

How can the spread of the bacteria be minimised?

By thorough hand-washing using soap and water by everyone involved in your care. Alcohol hand rub is ineffective and therefore not advised. Doctors, nurses, and other staff who care for patients with C. difficile will wear gloves and aprons when attending to them. This helps prevent the spread of infection to other patients.

Cleaning must be of a high standard because the bacteria can remain in the environment for long periods. Your bed area and surrounding surfaces must be kept tidy to allow all surfaces to be cleaned daily.

Are my visitors at risk of infection?

No. C. difficile does not usually cause diarrhoea in healthy people. Your visitors should wash their hands with soap and water before and after visiting you. If they are assisting in your care, they will need to wear gloves and aprons; when removing these, hands need to be washed with soap and water. Alcohol hand rub is not effective against this bacterium so always use soap and water.

Should I take any special precautions when I leave hospital?

Provided you are well enough and you are medically fit, you can go home. If the diarrhoea restarts, tell your GP straight away; we will have written to your GP on discharge to tell them you have had C.difficile while in hospital.

Good hand hygiene (routine washing) and keeping your home clean are all that's needed.

Wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before handling food.

Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household detergent.

If you still have diarrhoea, any soiled clothes, bedding and towels etc should be washed separately in a washing machine at the highest temperature possible for that fabric. You do not have to separate your washing after the diarrhoea has stopped.