

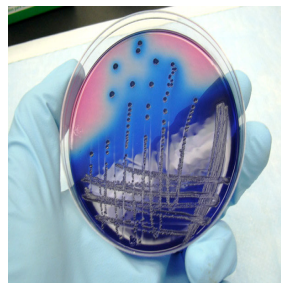
INFECTION CONTROL

NEWSLETTER

September 2010

Clostridium Difficile

(C-Difficile)



C-difficile is an anaerobic bacterium present naturally in the gut of a healthy adults or children. (does not require O₂ to survive and multiply).

In healthy people c-difficile does not cause any problem, because 'good' bacteria in the gut to keep it in the balance.

Antibiotics can interfere with this balance of bacteria which multiply and produce toxins. This is when a patient is described as being infected with C-difficile.

Symptoms

- Mild to severe diarrhoea
- Blood stained stools
- Fever
- Cramps in the abdomen

These symptoms can lead to inflammation of the bowel, leading to peritonitis, septicaemia and possible perforation of the bowel, in rare cases can be fatal.

Who is at risk?

- Patients treated with broad-spectrum antibiotics
- Long stay patients in health care settings
- Over 65 yrs
- Underlying conditions
- Immuno-compromised patients
- Bowel surgery

Spread

- Spores (which are resistant to chemicals)
- Diarrhoea can contaminate patients surroundings etc toilet seats, bedclothes, skin and clothing
- Easily spread on the hands of healthcare workers from patient contact or surfaces

Diagnosed

- Laboratory tests on faeces

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Treatment

- Stop taking antibiotics (if possible) in mild cases
- If severe then treat metronidazole or vancomycin (but be aware that these drugs can cause stomach cramps and nausea and vomiting).
- Patients can be easily re-infected

Prevention

- Use of soap and water (alcohol hand rub is ineffective)
- Use of PPE
- Isolation and single toilet facilities (if possible)
- Clean down surfaces with bleach
- Advise visitors (restrict visitors and about hand washing)

Most important is hand washing with soap and water

Hospitals

The need to follow the hospital policy:

Isolation Policy – Preventing Transmission of Infectious Organisms in a Health Care Settings.

Contact Precautions is the most frequently and most important precaution used in the health care setting.

Good communication, between staff, patients and families is also important

