

## IF I HAVE CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE HOW CAN I PROTECT THOSE AROUND ME?

### At home

- Make sure you finish your course of antibiotics even if you feel better
- Drink plenty of fluids to help stop dehydration
- Make sure you, your visitors and carers wash their hands:
  - after using the toilet / changing nappies
  - after touching animals or animal waste
  - after handling rubbish
  - before and after preparing food and drinks
  - when hands look or feel dirty
  - after touching a public surface, such as flushing a public toilet
- Tell friends and family not to visit if they are ill
- If your visitors have had diarrhoea they must wait two days AFTER the symptoms have cleared up before they visit
- Make sure the toilet you use is kept clean
- Keep all surfaces clean with bleach-based household detergents / disinfectants.

### IT'S OK TO ASK

If you have any concerns about cleanliness, Clostridium difficile and how it is treated ask your doctor/nurse, they can help put your mind at rest.

**Don't be frightened to ask your carers if they've washed their hands. They will expect it and by doing so you will be helping to control infection.**

## WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?

a simple guide



You may have read about Clostridium difficile or C. difficile in newspapers. It is often called a 'superbug'. Here's what you need to know about Clostridium difficile.

### WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?

Clostridium difficile is one of many bacteria that live harmlessly in the human bowel. 'Good' bacteria keep it in check. Some antibiotics can 'kill off' the good bacteria and occasionally damage the lining of the bowel.

Sometimes there are no symptoms of Clostridium difficile, but often it presents itself as diarrhoea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pains and tenderness.

### WHY IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE SO WIDESPREAD NOW?

There are a number of reasons it appears to be more widespread now. These include:

- infections may have gone undiagnosed in previous years
- older people in our society are getting illnesses connected to long-term health problems which require antibiotics
- we treat some illnesses with antibiotics, when given time the body can usually heal itself
- bugs are becoming harder to treat with antibiotics as they find ways to resist medicine.
- antibiotics have been used to treat viruses that we know do not respond to antibiotics

### HOW DO PEOPLE GET CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?

When normal bacterium in the bowel are disturbed Clostridium difficile can multiply and produce toxins which irritate the bowel and cause diarrhoea. Those suffering from Clostridium difficile shed bacteria or spores in their faeces. These spores survive unseen in the environment on surfaces such as toilets/commodores. They can be spread from person to person unless good hygiene measures are followed. If good hand hygiene is not observed, spores picked up on hands can be swallowed when eating or drinking.

Those over 65 years of age are more at risk, particularly if they are being treated with antibiotics for an underlying illness.

### IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE TREATABLE?

Yes. Clostridium difficile can be treated with specific antibiotics such as Metronidazole or Vancomycin which are usually taken orally for 10 days. Milder cases of the infection may not need any treatment although your doctor may decide to stop any other medicines that could be making the infection worse.

If you have been treated for Clostridium difficile and you no longer have diarrhoea you aren't considered a risk to others providing you continue to wash your hands with soap and clear running water after using the toilet and before preparing food.

### CLEAN HANDS

Washing your hands with soap and clear running water reduces the spread of infection. Alcohols cleansing gels / hand rubs are NOT effective for Clostridium difficile. When you wash your hands it is important to include palms, thumbs and fingers, including tips, and backs of hands. The recommended way of washing your hands is shown below. **Spending at least 30 seconds washing your hands will help fight infection.**



Wet hands with water



Apply enough soap to cover all hand surfaces



Rub hands palm to palm



Rub back of each hand with palm of other hand with fingers interlaced



Rub palm to palm with fingers interlaced



Rub each thumb clasped in opposite hand using a rotational movement



Rub tips of fingers in opposite palm in circular motion



Rub each wrist with opposite hand



Rinse hands with water



Dry thoroughly