

# What To Do About Clostridium Difficile (C. Difficile)



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R.D. 1/06  
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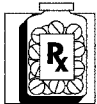
## What is C. difficile?

C. difficile is a germ that some people have in their intestines (gut). Most of the time these germs do not cause a problem. Sometimes, such as during cancer drug treatment and during or after taking antibiotics for an infection, these germs can cause an upset stomach and very bad diarrhea (many loose bowel movements). This diarrhea usually does not clear up by itself. The infected person can become very sick. C. difficile can spread from one person to another.

## How is it spread to others?

If the person with C. difficile does not clean themselves and wash their hands well, that person can leave germs and spores (formed by the germ so it can live outside the body) on any thing that they touch. These spores can live up to 5 months on things unless they are cleaned off. Other people who touch these infected things will pick up the spores on their hands, and may then touch their own mouths or faces, and become infected.

Most healthy peoples' bodies will fight off the spores and they will not become sick. The people who are most likely to get sick are:



- Those taking antibiotics or medicine for cancer (chemotherapy).
- Those who are HIV positive or have AIDS.
- Those whose immune systems are not working right.



## How is C. difficile treated?

Your health care provider may give you medicine to clear up your infection. But while you are in the hospital you will be in isolation to keep the germs from spreading.

## While you are in the hospital:

- It is very important to wash your hands well with soap and running water for 15 seconds:
  - after using the bathroom,
  - after taking off gloves
  - after touching your drainage or infected areas.
- Try not to touch any IV lines, tubes, drains, drainage, infected areas or dressings you may have. Let the nurses or doctors do this.



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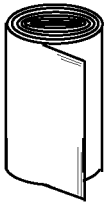
- You can walk in the hallways, but always wash your hands first and wear a clean gown over your clothes.
- Do not go into other patient's rooms or waiting rooms while you are in the hospital.

### Rules for your visitors:

- They should check in at the Nurses' Station to find out exactly what they should do each time they enter and leave your room.
- They should not touch linen carts or go into the kitchen. They should ask the nurse for sheets, towels, ice or other supplies they need.
- They should wash their hands well when leaving your room.

### How to keep your family and others from getting *C. difficile* when you are home:

- Hand washing is the most important thing everybody can do. Wash for at least 15 seconds with soap and water.



- The person with *C. difficile* should use paper towels. It is best if the others in the house also use paper towels.
- If possible, use separate toilets and bathrooms.
- If you must share a toilet, clean the toilet seat and handle, and the sink and door knobs in the bathroom several times a day. Use a bleach mix (1 ounce of bleach to 3 cups of water, **OR** 1 tablespoon of bleach to 1 1/2 cups of water).



- Make up this bleach mix fresh every day.
- If you use the same mix all day, keep it in a container that you cannot see through, because light will break down the bleach.
- Use a separate paper towel or cloth for each thing or area that you clean.
- Never put the used towel or cloth back into the bleach mix.
- Keep the bleach mix away from children.
- Always put a label on the container.
- Use water-proof gloves to protect hands from the bleach mix.
- Every day use hot water to wash the towel and washcloth used by the person who has *C. difficile*. It is best to also wash their sheets and pajamas every day. Keep their laundry separate from the rest of the familys' laundry.
- Clean furniture and other surfaces more often. Use paper towels or cloths damp with the bleach mix. Never put the used towel or cloth back into the bleach mix.
- Remember, good handwashing is the most important thing everybody can do!

Once your diarrhea has stopped, you will no longer need to do all these things, but remember that good hand washing can help keep many infections away!

