

# Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)

## How to prevent the spread of infection in hospital and at home

One of your tests shows that you are having diarrhea caused by bacteria (germ) called 'clostridium difficile' (sounds like 'klos-trih-dee-um dif-eh-seal'). You might hear it called *C. diff* (sounds like 'see-dif').

When you are sick with this germ, we refer to it as Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI). Other signs of infection include: fever, loss of appetite, nausea, belly cramping, and sometimes blood in your feces ('poo'). Antibiotics are used to treat a CDI.

This fact sheet explains why it is important to prevent this infection from spreading to other patients in the hospital, or to your friends and family when you go home.

### How is the *C. diff* germ spread?

*C. diff* can survive on surfaces for a long period of time. *C. diff* can be spread when a person who is infected touches surfaces with their unclean or unwashed hands, such as a toilet flusher, water tap, or light switch.

You can become ill if you eat or touch your mouth without cleaning your hands because you may have touched surfaces with *C. diff* without knowing. Not everyone gets sick from *C. diff*. People with certain medical conditions, or who are 65 years old or older are at greater risk of getting sick from *C. diff*.

### While in the hospital

#### How to prevent CDI from spreading

If your tests show that you are having diarrhea caused by *C. diff*, here is what you can do to prevent the infection from spreading to others while you are in the hospital.

- Clean your hands often with soap and water, especially before and after using the toilet, and before and after eating or drinking.



- Stay in your hospital room as much as possible.
- **Do not** use common areas, such as the patient kitchen, gift shop, or cafeteria. You can go to other areas of the hospital for treatments and tests.
- If you must walk around, ask your health care provider when and where you can walk and if any special equipment is needed.

### Contact Precautions Plus

If you have or are suspected to have a CDI, health care providers and visitors follow the rules called ‘**Contact Precautions Plus**’ to prevent *C. diff* from spreading to other patients in the hospital.

**Contact Precautions Plus** means:

- We post a sign on the door of your room.
- We put on gloves and wear a gown over our clothing while taking care of you.
- We ask you to use your own washroom or commode (toilet on wheels). **Do not** share your washroom or commode with other patients or your visitors.
- We ask your visitors to clean their hands before entering and after leaving your room. They may also be asked to wear a gown and gloves if they help you to wash or use the toilet.
- We use special cleaning products, such as bleach. Some cleaners have a strong smell.
- Health care providers and visitors remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands when leaving your room.

### At home

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#### How to prevent CDI from spreading

Follow these instructions to prevent *C. diff* from spreading to others or re-infecting yourself.

- If you are given a prescription to treat CDI, take the medicine exactly as prescribed by your doctor and pharmacist. **Do not** take half-doses or stop taking the medicine until you have taken all the pills – even if you feel better.
- Wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom and before preparing and eating food.
- People who live with you should wash their hands often.
- **Do not** share personal care items such as towels, toothbrushes or bar soap.
- Clean bathrooms and other frequently touched surfaces for example, light switches and water taps once per day and more often if visibly soiled.
- Wash cleaning clothes after each use.

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#### See your doctor right away or go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- You develop more diarrhea.
- You develop more belly pain.
- You have a fever, with temperature greater than 38°C (100°F).
- You are dehydrated.

#### To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your pharmacist
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca).