

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (also known as C. diff) is a bacteria that can cause diarrhea. Most cases of C. diff infection occur in residents taking antibiotics.

The most common symptoms of C. diff are:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Stomach pain and/or tenderness.

C. diff can form spores, which allow it to live outside of the human body for months. Spores may be found on things in the environment, such as bedding, bed rails, bathroom fixtures and medical equipment.

C. diff is shed in the feces of an infected person. Any surface, medical device, or material that becomes contaminated with feces may serve as a reservoir for C. diff spores. Spores can then be transferred to residents via the hands of health care personnel or visitors who have touched a contaminated surface or item.

The best defense against the spread of C. diff is good handwashing practices.

For more information, visit the following websites:

CDC Long Term Care Infection Control

www.cdc.gov/longtermcare/prevention/index.html

Implementing Long-Term Care Infection Control Guidelines Into Practice: A Case-Based Approach

www.annalsoflongtermcare.com/content/implementing-long-term-care-infection-control-guidelines-into-practice-a-case-based-approach

APIC/SHEA Guideline-Infection Control in Long Term Care

www.apic.org/Resource_/TinyMceFileManager/Practice_Guidance/id_APIC-SHEA_GuidelineforICinLTCFs.pdf

C. diff Algorithms for Long Term Care

www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/cdiff/hcp/lcgorithms.pdf

American Journal of Infection Control (AJIC)

www.ajicjournal.org/

Healthcare Infection Control Practices Advisory Committee (HICPAC)

www.cdc.gov/hicpac

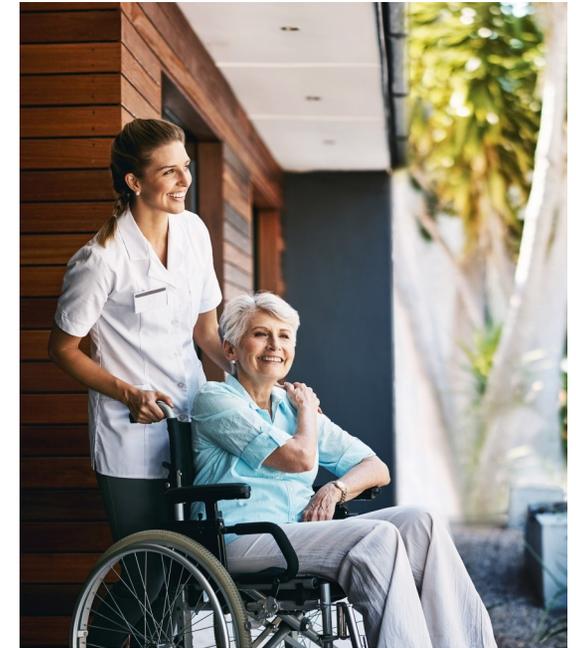
Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology (APIC)

www.apic.org

North Dakota Department of Health

www.ndhealth.gov/disease/hai/

Prevention tips and care for the resident with **Clostridium difficile**



 **NORTH DAKOTA**
DEPARTMENT of HEALTH

Division of Disease Control
2635 E. Main Avenue, P.O. Box 5520
Bismarck, N.D. 58506-5520
Telephone: 701.328.2378

Important Things to Remember

- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics.
- Gowns and gloves should be used by health care providers and visitors when in contact with an infected resident. Isolation can be considered to be removed once the resident has had formed stools for 48-72 hours. Depending on the clinical situation of the resident, contact isolation may be continued until treatment has been completed. Continue to use gowns and gloves when doing direct, personal care beyond the 72-hour mark.
- C. diff spores can live a long time outside of the body on items such as bathroom fixtures and bedding.
- Environmental cleaning is of vital importance. Cleaning with an EPA-registered, hospital-grade disinfectant with claims against C. diff is recommended.
- Handwashing should be done with soap and water, if readily available, or hand sanitizer until soap and water is able to be used. Hand sanitizers have been found to be ineffective against C. diff spores.
- **HANDWASHING IS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE!**



Stop the Spread!

Handwashing should occur with soap and water:

- Immediately after using the bathroom.
- Before and after all resident contact.
- Before and after contact with items in the resident's room.
- Immediately after removal of gloves.

Visitors and health care providers should wear disposable gloves and a gown when entering residents' rooms and during resident care.

Contact precautions should be used for residents with known or suspected C. diff infections. Ambulatory residents who are not alert and orientated should be in a private room, when possible. If a resident is afebrile, alert and loose stools can be contained, they can participate in group activities and attend meals in the dining room.

C. diff-infected residents should change into clean, laundered clothing each day. They must only use the bathroom dedicated to them in their room. Residents must wash their hands with soap and water prior to leaving their room to attend activities and before all meals.

Residents with C. diff should have their own dedicated equipment, including blood pressure cuffs, stethoscopes, whole blood glucose testing devices, etc.

Environmental Cleaning

Environmental cleaning is of vital importance to keep health care providers and visitors healthy.

This not only includes the resident's room, but also his or her medical equipment, such as walkers, wheelchairs, etc.



Cleaning helps reduce the chance of residents becoming reinfected.

Standard precautions should be used when handling laundry. Hand hygiene should be performed immediately after handling laundry.

Antibiotic Use

Residents with C. diff should avoid excessive antibiotic use, but will need to take a prescribed antibiotic to treat C. diff. Antibiotics should be taken until completed.

Make sure to educate residents and families about the importance of taking all medication as directed.

