

If I need some more information who can I speak to?

If nurses looking after you are not able to answer all your questions, you can ask them to contact the Infection Control Nurses who will be able to give you more information about *Clostridium difficile*.

Where can I get more information about *Clostridium difficile*?

The Health Protection Agency
www.hpa.org.uk

Health Protection Scotland
www.hps.scot.nhs.uk

The Centres for Disease Control, Atlanta,
USA
www.cdc.gov

NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde
0141 201 4931

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

*An Information Leaflet for
Inpatients & Relatives*

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile are bacteria (germs) that can cause an infection in the bowel which may result in diarrhoea. *Clostridium difficile* mainly causes infection amongst hospital patients, especially the elderly. Infection usually only occurs in patients who have received recent antibiotic therapy.

How do I know that I have *Clostridium difficile*?

If you have unexplained diarrhoea a stool sample is sent to the laboratory to test for *Clostridium difficile*. It can take two days before the result is known.

How did I get *Clostridium difficile*?

Bacteria are found on everyone both inside and outside the body. *Clostridium difficile* may have been in your bowel before you came into hospital where it lived without doing you any harm (colonisation), or you may have acquired it since you came into hospital.

If you have been given antibiotics or other medication the normal bacteria in your bowel may alter, allowing *Clostridium difficile* to multiply and cause diarrhoea (infection). *Clostridium difficile* can also spread on peoples' hands and by contamination of the environment and equipment.

How can *Clostridium difficile* be treated?

If possible, antibiotics that are used to treat any other infections that you may have (eg a chest infection) are stopped. To treat severe diarrhoea you may be given another antibiotic for 7-10 days. This usually clears up the diarrhoea but occasionally relapses or re-infection can occur.

What will happen to me?

If you have diarrhoea you may be moved to a single room, given your own commode or a toilet may be allocated to you to prevent the possibility of spread to other patients. Many patients in hospital have also had antibiotics and are therefore vulnerable to this infection.

If there are several patients with the same problem you may be nursed together in a designated area of the ward. Staff will be wearing gloves and aprons when caring for you.

After two to three days of being symptom-free these precautions may be stopped and your room/bedspace will be thoroughly cleaned. Remember to drink plenty of fluids whilst you are having diarrhoea.

Will *Clostridium difficile* affect my family & friends?

Clostridium difficile is not a risk to healthy people including children. Visitors should wash their hands carefully with soap and

water before leaving your room, or if you are nursed with other patients before leaving the ward. Visitors should also use the hand gel before entering and leaving the area. Gloves and aprons are not necessary for visitors. Only two visitors should visit at a time.

Visitors should be encouraged not to move around the ward from patient to patient, in order to prevent the spread of infection. If they are visiting someone else apart from you, it is better if they see you last. If you or your visitors have any questions please feel free to discuss them with the ward staff or ask to see the infection control nurses.

How can I stop the spread of *Clostridium difficile*?

It is very important that you wash your hands carefully, particularly after having used the toilet and before eating.

If you are having difficulty in getting to a sink please ask the staff to bring you a bowl of soapy water or alternatively you can use hand wipes.

Can I go home if I have *Clostridium difficile*?

As soon as your general condition allows you can go home. Your GP will be contacted so that he/she is aware that you have had this infection should your diarrhoea restart.

If you are going to a residential or nursing home you may have to wait for at least two days after your diarrhoea has settled.