

## CARE IN YOUR HOME

### What will happen when I go home?

- Good handwashing, good personal hygiene, and good housekeeping are important and should always be done to maintain good health. These practices will help prevent the spread of C. diff to other persons in your home.
- Always tell your doctor or other healthcare providers if you have C. diff. This helps prevent spread to others and helps your doctor choose the right antibiotics if necessary.

### House Cleaning

- No special cleaning of household items (e.g. dishes) is required.
- Laundry can be cleaned in a washer and dryer with regular detergent. Only those items which are heavily soiled or wet should be washed separately from other laundry.
- While having diarrhea, clean the bathroom and any frequently touched surfaces daily with a diluted bleach solution (1cup bleach to 9 parts water). Disinfectants need enough time to kill C. diff; therefore, wet surfaces with your disinfectant and allow to air dry.

### Handwashing

- Wash your hands before making any food and before eating. This practice should be followed by everyone in your house.
- Wash your hands with after using the washroom.
- Everyone who might help you with using the washroom or with your personal hygiene should wash their hands after contact with you.

## Why Clean your hands?

- Even if your hands look clean, they may carry harmful germs. In order to stop the spread of these germs, you must clean your hands.

## How to clean hands properly?

### Soap and Water

- Wet hands under warm running water, apply soap and lather.
- Using friction cover all surfaces of hands including the palm and back of hands, fingertips, nail beds, between fingers and thumbs for a minimum of 20 seconds; rinse with water.
- Dry hands with paper towel. Use a new paper towel to turn off taps.

### Alcohol Hand Sanitizer

- C. diff is different from other bacteria in that it forms spores that can not be killed by alcohol hand sanitizer.
- Hands **must** be washed with soap and water, as this action removes the spores from hands.



Five Hills Health Region  
March 2013

## Clostridium difficile (C. diff)

Five Hills Health Region  
Regional Infection Prevention &  
Control Department



**Information for  
Patients / Residents  
and Visitors**

## What is Clostridium difficile (C. diff)?

### What is C. diff?

- C. diff is a spore forming bacteria that can be found in stool. About 1-3% of people have C. diff as a normal part of the bacteria living in their intestine, while others acquire it from the hands of Healthcare workers or contaminated environmental surfaces.
- C. diff disease occurs when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the C. diff to grow. When C. diff grows, it produces substances (toxins). These toxins can damage the bowel causing diarrhea or more serious conditions such as colitis.
- C. diff is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in healthcare facilities.
- The main symptoms of C. diff are: watery diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain or tenderness. Your healthcare provider will ask for a stool sample for the laboratory to test for the C. diff toxins.

### How do you get C. diff?

- C. diff disease usually occurs during or after the use of antibiotics. Old age, the presence of other serious illnesses, a weakened immune system, gastrointestinal surgery, overall poor health or a stay in a healthcare facility may increase the risk of getting C. diff.

### How does C. diff spread?

- C. diff is spread through contact with someone who has C. diff. If caregivers don't wash their hands, then they can spread it to the next person they care for.
- C. diff can also be spread by touching surfaces (e.g. toilet seats, bedpans, door handles etc. ) that have become contaminated with C. diff spores.

## What happens if you have C. diff and are in a healthcare facility?

In a healthcare facility, patients who have C. diff will be placed on isolation to prevent the spread of the bacteria to other patients.

Isolation will involve the following:

- You are allowed out of your room for essential purposes only (i.e. medical tests and treatments). You will be required to wash your hands, wear a gown and gloves before exiting the room.
- Signs will be placed on your door to remind staff and visitors about the Additional Precautions to be used before entering and exiting your room.
- Healthcare workers are required to wear gowns and gloves while in your room. This will help prevent the spread of C. diff to other patients.
- Visitors are also required to wear a gown and gloves while in your room. This will help to prevent the spread of C. diff.
- As always, patient must wash their hands well with soap and water after using the restroom and before eating.
- Don't forget to remind all staff, visitors and family members that they must wash their hands with **soap and water** before entering and exiting your room.

### Is there treatment for C. diff disease?

- Treatment depends on how sick you are with

*It is very important for staff and visitors to wash their hands before entering and exiting your room.*

### Can my family or visitors get

### C. diff?

- If family and visitors follow the instructions on the Additional Precautions signs on the door, the risk of acquiring C. diff is minimal.

the disease. C. diff disease is usually mild but sometimes can be severe. People with mild symptoms may not need treatment.

- Stopping current antibiotic therapy may be enough, your doctor will decide. For more severe cases a special antibiotic is given.
- There are extreme cases in which surgery is required. It is important to take all medications prescribed. **Do not** take any drugs from the drugstore that stop your diarrhea (e.g.. Imodium). If diarrhea continues after treatment or comes back, contact your doctor.
- You will be removed off isolation when your bowel pattern has returned to normal for a period of at least 48 hours.

***Do not be shy about reminding everyone to wash their hands.***