

C.difficile Infection

What is C.difficile Infection ?

C.difficile colitis is an infection caused by a toxin produced by a bacteria called Clostridium difficile. It often occurs after being on an antibiotic treatment for a long period of time. When antibiotics kill off the friendly bacteria that normally live in your bowel, spores of the bacteria *C.difficile* take advantage of the situation, multiply and release a toxin. The toxins from the bacteria cause the bowel to become inflamed. For healthy people, *C. difficile* does not pose a health risk. People living with HIV, as well as the elderly and those with other illnesses or those who are taking antibiotics are at a greater risk of *C.difficile* infection.

What are the symptoms of C.difficile?

Symptoms include watery diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain/tenderness. If you experience any of these symptoms while at Casey House it is important that you tell a member of your health care team.

How is C.difficile spread?

When a person has *C.difficile*, spores of the bacteria are found in their stool or feces and can remain on surfaces such as toilets, handles, linens, bedpans or commode chairs. When touching these items, the spore can be passed to your hands. If you touch your mouth, you can become infected. Your soiled hands can also spread the spores to other surfaces that can survive for a long time if not properly cleaned.

The spread of *C.difficile* occurs due to inadequate hand hygiene and environmental cleaning; therefore, proper infection control is achieved through consistent hand hygiene and thorough cleaning of the client environment. Healthcare workers can spread the bacteria to their clients if their hands are contaminated.

How is C.difficile treated?

For people with mild symptoms, no treatment may be required. For more severe cases, medication and sometimes surgery may be necessary. There are also new treatments, such as fecal transplantation, currently being studied for treating persistent *C. difficile* infection.

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What special precautions are required for C.difficile?

Hand washing with soap and water is important during a C. difficile outbreak and is one of the best defences against further spread of the bacteria.

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop *C.difficile* from spreading to other clients, staff and visitors at Casey House. If diagnosed with *C difficile*:

- A yellow contact precaution sign will be placed on the door of your room which indicates to health care workers, visitors or family that they will need to wear special personal protective equipment when inside your room.
- You will be instructed to wear a fresh gown and gloves each time you leave your room to decrease the risk of transmission to other clients.
- Your activities outside your room may be restricted (ie. for Recreational activities) because *C.difficile* can spread easily in hospital. This is another way we try to prevent the risk of transmission to other clients.
- Equipment used in your daily care will remain in your room (e.g. stethoscope, thermometer).
- A laundry hamper will be left in your room for linen and your own clothes. This laundry will need to be double-bagged to leave the room and your personal laundry and belongings will require extra cleaning.
- A private washroom will be provided to you.

- Disposable cutlery, plates and cups will be used and should be discarded in your room.
- You cannot share any personal items including towels, washcloths, razors, soap, creams, lotions, cosmetics, toothbrushes, nail files, combs and brushes.
- Your room will be cleaned twice per day using a strong cleaning agent that kills *C.difficile*.
- You are requested to limit the number of personal items from home you introduce into your room while you are actively being treated for *C.difficile*.
- Everyone must wash their hands when leaving your room.
- If you are treated or are no longer positive for *C.difficile*, your room and all your belongings will require a very extensive cleaning (called a 'terminal clean'). This will make sure all bacteria have been killed. This will minimize the risk of you being re-infected and also reduce the risk that another client could accidentally come into contact with the bacteria.

Good hand hygiene practices

You will be taught how to clean your hands with soap and water and with an alcohol based hand rub. Important times you need to clean your hands are:

- After using the bathroom or assisting someone to use the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Before you prepare food
- After touching / petting pets or animals
- Before eating and drinking
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- After handling dirty laundry
- Before you leave your room

Health care workers, visitors, family and friends must also clean their hands when they enter and when they leave your room. Do not be shy about reminding everyone to wash his or her hands.

Clean hands are everyone's responsibility.

What about visitors and family?

- Upon arrival to Casey House, your visitors, family and friends need to check in with the clinical staff at the second floor staff work station.
- Your visitors, family and friends will need to wear a disposable yellow gown and gloves every time they are in the room or going to be in physical contact with you.
- Your visitors, family and friends will need to dispose of their gown and gloves in the laundry bag provided in the room, avoid touching anything and wash their hands upon exiting.
- Family and visitors should not assist other patients with their care as they may inadvertently transfer *C.difficile* to another client.
- Everyone must wash their hands when leaving your room using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer or soap and water.
- Consider delaying in person visits from vulnerable or at risk people who may be susceptible to a *C.difficile* infection.

What will happen when I leave Casey House?

- Casey House will make every effort to resolve the issue before you leave, but many people with a *C.difficile* infection are able to cope and heal in their home and community.
- If you go to another health care facility or if you have continued care services in your home, some precautions might be needed. This is to prevent your caregivers from picking up the germ and spreading it to others.

- You can return to your normal routine as your symptoms and recovery permit.
- Take all medications and treatments as prescribed by your doctor and pharmacist until the last dose is finished.
- Good hand washing is very important to reduce the risk of spreading *C.difficile*.
- You can carry on with your usual activities and remind everyone to wash their hands often. You should wash your hands especially after you go to the bathroom or before preparing food.
- You should wash your laundry separately from your family's.
- People who live with you should also wash their hands frequently, after using the bathroom or before preparing food.

AT HOME:

How do I prevent the spread of C.difficile to others at home?

Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom, before preparing food and before eating.

Only use towels once for drying your hands or use disposable towels.

Wear disposable gloves if you expect to come into contact with stool, urine and wound drainage.

Wash your hands after removing gloves.

Frequently clean areas of your home, such as your bathroom, that may become contaminated with *C.difficile*.

Change and wash linens on a regular basis, or any time they are soiled.

Notify healthcare providers if you are infected or colonized (bacteria are present) with *C.difficile*.

What is the proper way to clean?

People without diarrhea are much less likely to spread germs into the environment. However, if diarrhea occurs, use a bleach-containing cleaner for the bathroom and high touch areas. If using bleach alone, then follow the directions on the label- generally one part bleach to ten parts water (1:10 solution) made fresh daily. Never mix bleach with other cleaners.

Wet the surface well and clean vigorously.

Allow the surface to air dry.

Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with stool such as the toilet (don't forget the flush handle) and sink and areas that are touched frequently such as door knobs and light switches.

What is the proper way to wash my clothes?

Wash clothes/fabrics separately if they are heavily soiled with stool:

Rinse off stool into the toilet.

Use the hot water cycle with soap, use bleach when fabric appropriate.

Dry items in the dryer on high heat, if possible.

What is the proper way to clean the dishes?

For regular cleaning, use of the dishwasher or hand washing with soap and water is very effective. Some people may prefer to final rinse their dishes and utensils in a diluted bleach solution of 1 tablespoon bleach in 1 gallon of water and allow them to air dry.