**WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?**

*C. difficile* is one of the many germs (bacteria) that can be found in stool (a bowel movement).

**WHAT IS C. DIFFICILE INFECTION (CDI)?**

*C. difficile* infection occurs when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the *C. difficile* to grow. When *C. difficile* grows, it produces substances (toxins). These toxins can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. CDI is usually mild but sometimes can be severe. In severe cases, surgery may be needed and in extreme cases CDI may cause death. *C. difficile* is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospital.

The main symptoms of CDI are:
- Diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness

**WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS FOR CDI?**

Certain people are at increased risk for acquiring CDI. These risk factors include:
- Antibiotic usage
- Bowel Surgery
- Chemotherapy
- Prolonged hospitalization
- Antacid

Additional risk factors such as old age, presence of other serious illnesses and poor overall health may increase the risk of severe disease.

**HOW WILL YOUR DOCTOR KNOW THAT YOU HAVE C. DIFFICILE?**

If you have symptoms of CDI, your doctor will ask for a sample of your diarrhea. The laboratory will test the stool to see if *C. difficile* toxins are present.

**HOW IS C. DIFFICILE TREATED?**

Treatment depends on how sick you are with the infection. Generally, people receive an antibiotic specific for CDI. For more severe illnesses, an antibiotic is given and sometimes surgery may be necessary.

**HOW DOES C. DIFFICILE SPREAD?**

When a person has CDI, the germs in the stool can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, handles, bedpans, or commode chairs. When touching these items our hands can become contaminated. If we then touch our mouth we can swallow the germ. Our contaminated hands also can spread the germ to other surfaces.
**How to Prevent Spread in the Hospital?**

If you have *C. difficile* diarrhea you will be moved to a private room until you are free from diarrhea for at least 2 days after completing treatment. Your activities outside the room may be restricted. Everyone who enters your room wears gloves and a gown. Everyone **MUST** clean their hands when leaving your room. You will be provided with a dedicated toilet or commode. Always wash your hands after using the bathroom. Visitors are not to use patient bathroom. Cleaning hands is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of this germ. As well, a thorough cleaning of your room and equipment will be done to remove any germs.

**What Should I Do at Home?**

Healthy people like your family and friends who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk of getting CDI. Once at home, precautions need not be as strict as in a hospital setting. Nonetheless certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading this germ to family members and other visitors.

**Hand Care:**
Wash your hands for 15 seconds:
- After using the toilet
- After touching dirty surfaces
- Before eating
- Before preparing meals.

**Cleaning the House:**
Use either a household cleaner diluted according to the instructions or diluted household bleach:
- Wet the surface well and clean using good friction
- Allow the surface to air dry
- Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with stool such as the toilet and sink. If you see stool remove first and then clean as described above.

**Cleaning Clothes/Other Fabric:**
Wash clothes/fabric separately if they are heavily soiled with stool:
- Rinse stool off,
- Clean in a hot water cycle with soap
- Dry items in the dryer if possible.

**Cleaning Dishes:**
Regular cleaning, you can use the dishwasher or clean by hand with soap and water.

**Medications:**
It is very important that you take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor. You should not use any drugs from the drugstore that will stop your diarrhea (e.g., Imodium). **If diarrhea persists or comes back, contact your doctor.**

If you want to know more about CDI disease:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

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