

Clostridioides difficile

Patient information sheet

What is Clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides difficile is a type of bacteria (bug) which causes diarrhoea, sometimes with abdominal pain and vomiting.

The word 'bacteria' has been used in this leaflet to describe commonly used terms, such as 'bugs' or 'germs'. The bacteria often occurs in the healthy gut and usually does no harm, until certain types of antibiotics kill other bacteria and encourage Clostridioides difficile to grow and cause diarrhoea.

Most often it affects elderly people and those who already have other health problems and require antibiotics on a regular basis.

The symptoms can range from mild diarrhoea for a few days which stops on its own, to frequent offensive stools with mucus and sometimes blood.

How is Clostridioides difficile diagnosed?

If you have diarrhoea that is suspected as being infectious, i.e. there is no other obvious cause, the nursing staff will ask you to provide a stool specimen which will be sent to the laboratory for testing. The result should be available after about 24 - 48 hours.

Can it be treated?

Yes. Sometimes stopping the antibiotics is sufficient. In more severe cases a different and specific antibiotic will be given for seven to ten days.

Infection prevention and control precautions

We will nurse you in a single room with contact precautions. This is known as 'barrier or isolation nursing'. Keeping the door closed will help to prevent spread of the bacteria within the ward area. A separate leaflet is available which explains being barrier nursed - PI 19 'Isolation precautions': royalpapworth.nhs.uk/download_file/1511/305.

A member of the infection prevention and control team will visit you within 24 hours of the result becoming available (within normal working hours, Monday - Friday) to explain your result, the treatment and answer any questions you or your family may have.

Clostridioides difficile can survive in dust, bed sheets and on surfaces, so your room should be cleaned daily by the ward domestic.

It is advisable to change your nightwear and towels daily. Please ask a member of ward staff for clean towels.

Clostridioides difficile can be spread on hands. Unfortunately, hand sanitiser is not effective against Clostridioides difficile so hand washing with soap and water is very important to prevent spread of infection:

- You are advised to wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet and before meals.
- Your visitors are advised to wash their hands

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Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

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with soap and water before entering and leaving your room.

- All staff are required to wash their hands before entering and leaving your room.

It is possible you may not be able to see staff cleaning their hands before entering your room, but **it is ok to ask** staff if they have cleaned their hands.

Your personal laundry should be put separately through the washing machine cycle at home. Hands should be washed after handling laundry.

How will I know when the Clostridioides difficile has gone?

The infection prevention and control team will review you on a regular basis to monitor your progress. When the diarrhoea has stopped and your normal bowel habit has returned for a period of 48 hours, we consider the infection has gone. There is no need to send a further specimen to check.

Can it come back?

Unfortunately yes. Further courses of certain types of antibiotics may cause the symptoms to return. Sometimes it will be necessary to give a longer course of treatment to eliminate the problem.

What about my family and other visitors?

It is usually quite safe for you to receive visitors, as Clostridioides difficile does not harm healthy people; however if you have a visitor who has a long term health problem, then please contact the infection prevention and control team for advice prior to their visit.

What do I need to do about any future admissions to hospital or visits to the GP?

It is important that you tell the admitting hospital that you have had Clostridioides difficile in the past, as this will help the medical staff if they need to prescribe antibiotics.

It is also important that you inform your GP that you have had Clostridioides difficile, especially when they are prescribing antibiotics. The Infection Prevention and Control team will also write to your GP on your discharge from Royal Papworth Hospital.

We hope you can be reassured by the information contained in this leaflet and understand that the measures being taken are part of our continued commitment to the prevention and control of infection within Royal Papworth Hospital.

Further information

Please do not hesitate to ask a member of the ward staff, in the first instance, if you have any further questions or ask to contact a member of the infection prevention and control team,

Tel: **01223 638052**



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