

C. diff: The Facts

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What is C. diff?

Clostridioides difficile (also known as C. diff) is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and colitis (an inflammation of the colon).

It's estimated to cause almost half a million illnesses in the United States each year.

About 1 in 5 patients who get C. diff will get it again.

Within a month of diagnosis, 1 in 11 people over age 65 died of a healthcare-associated C. diff infection.

Risk Factors for C. diff

Most cases of C. diff occur when you've been taking antibiotics.

There are other risk factors:

- Being 65 or older
- Recent hospitalizations
- A weakened immune system
- Previous infection with C. diff or known exposure to the germs

Symptoms of C. diff

Symptoms might develop within a few days after you begin taking antibiotics.

- Diarrhea including loose, watery stools (poop) or frequent bowel movements for several days
- Fever
- Stomach tenderness or pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea

C. diff is the most common healthcare-associated infection, causing half a million infections and an estimated 29,000 deaths.

Protect yourself and your family.

If You Have Symptoms

If you have been taking antibiotics recently and have symptoms of C. diff, you should see a doctor.

- Developing diarrhea is fairly common while on, or after taking, antibiotics, but in only a few cases will that diarrhea be caused by C. diff. If your diarrhea is very severe, do not delay getting medical care.
- Your doctor will review your symptoms and order a lab test of a stool (poop) sample.
- If the test is positive, you'll take an antibiotic (e.g. vancomycin or fidaxomicin) for at least 10 days. If you were already taking an antibiotic, your healthcare provider might ask you to stop taking it if they think it's safe to do so.
- For severe cases, your doctor might decide to admit you to the hospital.

Is C. diff Contagious?

Yes. To keep from spreading C. diff to others:

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Try to use a separate bathroom if you have diarrhea.
- Take showers and wash with soap.

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Peggy Lillis
Foundation
C. diff Education and Advocacy