

Clostridium difficile infections (CDI) - Frequently Asked Questions

What is Clostridium difficile infection (or C. difficile)?

Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI) is often abbreviated to *C. difficile* or *C. diff* for short.

C. difficile is a germ that can be found, on occasion, in people's bowels. It does not always cause problems or symptoms but in some cases can. In some people who are also taking antibiotics, the germ can grow because the antibiotics kill off many of the "good" and harmless germs that normally prevent the *C. difficile* from growing to high numbers.

C. difficile makes a toxin that damages the fragile lining of the bowel causing inflammation and loose watery bowel movements (diarrhea) and inflammation.

What are the symptoms of CDI?

If you get the *C. difficile* germ you most often do not develop any symptoms of diarrhea at all. People, particularly those taking antibiotics, may get diarrhea. The diarrhea can range from mild to severe with many bowel movements in a day and accompanied by abdominal pain and cramps.

What are the risk factors for CDI?

Healthy people are not usually susceptible to *C. difficile*. Seniors and people who have other illnesses or conditions being treated with antibiotics and those who take acid-suppressing stomach medications are at greater risk of an infection from *C. difficile*.

Can a person die from CDI?

Yes, in severe cases of CDI, death can occur. This is uncommon and tends to occur in those people with other severe health problems. The vast majority of people recover from CDI.

What preventative measures can be taken?

C. difficile can be spread from one person to another by contact, hand hygiene is critical to preventing its spread in a health-care setting.

If a patient is positive for *C. difficile*, they are placed on Contact Precautions.

Contact Precautions aim to limit the spread of CDI to other patients and to health care providers. You may be placed in a private room or with other patients who are also carrying the bacteria. A sign may be placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about these special Contact Precautions. Those caring for you as well as visitors will be asked to clean their hands, gown and glove before entering your room. Everyone who enters and leaves your room must clean their hands well. The room and equipment in the room will be cleaned and disinfected regularly.

What is the treatment for CDI?

If a person has diarrhea due to CDI, a doctor will prescribe a type of antibiotic that kills the *C. difficile* germs. The two most commonly used antibiotics to treat CDI are metronidazole and vancomycin