

# Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)

## What is Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)?

Clostridium difficile is one of the many germs (bacteria) that can be found in stool (a bowel movement). Clostridium difficile is also known as CDI. Clostridium difficile is a bacterium that causes mild to severe diarrhea and intestinal conditions like pseudomembranous colitis (inflammation of the colon). CDI is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

## Who gets Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)?

CDI usually occurs in the elderly, people with severe underlying illness, and people taking certain antibiotics (especially over a prolonged period of time) or cancer chemotherapy. In addition, patients taking stomach ulcer drugs, known as proton pump inhibitors, are at increased risk for contracting Clostridium difficile infection.

## How does Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI) Spread?

When a person has CDI the germs in the stool can soil surfaces such as toilets, handles, bedpans, or commode chairs. When touching these items our hands can become soiled. If we then touch our mouth we can swallow the germ. Our soiled hands also can spread the germ to other surfaces.

## What happens if someone has Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)?

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.

## The main symptoms of Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI) include:

- diarrhea
- fever
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal pain or tenderness.

## How do I prevent the spread of Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)?

If you have CDI while in hospital, you will be moved to a private room until you are free from diarrhea for at least 2 days. Your activities outside the room will be restricted. Everyone who enters your room will have to take precautions as recommended by the hospital. There will be signage that will describe the steps to follow. Everyone MUST clean their hands when leaving your room.

Always wash your hands after using the 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.

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**Good Hand washing is important in preventing the spread of Clostridium Difficile Infection (CDI)**

Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 15 seconds:

- after using the toilet
- after touching dirty surfaces
- before eating
- before preparing meals

Source: PIDAC (2013) Annex C: Testing, Surveillance and Management of Clostridium Difficile in all Health Care Settings

For information regarding infection control in the home see fact sheet “C. difficile – Infection Control in the Home”.

*This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a health care professional about any health concerns.*

**For further information contact the Infectious Disease Program at 625-8318  
or toll free 1-888-294-6630 ex. 8318**