

Patient information

Clostridioides difficile

What is Clostridioides difficile?

Clostridioides difficile (previously known as Clostridium difficile (C. difficile)) are bacteria found in the bowel, usually causing no harm. This bacteria can cause diarrhoea, especially in older persons, those who have been in contact with a contaminated environment, those who have undergone bowel procedures or in people who have been or are being treated with certain antibiotics. Unfortunately, some antibiotics and other medications can upset the balance of bacteria in your bowel and allow the C. difficile to over multiply. Some strains of C. difficile can produce toxins, causing symptoms of abdominal pain, diarrhoea and occasionally vomiting. If you have unexplained diarrhoea, the nurses will take a stool specimen to identify if C. difficile is causing your symptoms. The test will also identify if the C. difficile bacteria is producing toxins or not. Symptoms may be mild and clear up after a few days without any treatment, however, if the symptoms persist or worsen the doctors will prescribe a special antibiotic treatment.

What is the treatment?

Sometimes the diarrhoea resolves without treatment, just by stopping other antibiotics, however, most patients will need treatment with an antibiotic such as vancomycin or fidaxomicin, which are effective against C. difficile. These antibiotics are usually given by mouth (or feeding tube if this is not possible) so that they can go straight to the site of infection on the inside of the bowel. Usually, after a few days, you will be feeling much better, but in some cases a second course of antibiotics might be necessary.

Unfortunately, in some severe cases, the bowel may stop working properly, with the result that the antibiotics do not travel down the gut as far as they need to. In this case we may give metronidazole directly into the blood through a drip. Vancomycin cannot reach the bowel if given through the vein and so it may be given by an enema, where the antibiotic is given through a tube into the back passage, usually between 2 and 4 times a day.

For some cases of infection that do not respond to antibiotic treatment the doctors may consider a treatment called faecal microbiota transplant (FMT). This is when bacteria from a healthy person's bowel is transplanted into your bowel to help stop the infection.

Do I need to be isolated in a single room?

If the diarrhoea is severe, there is a risk that the infection can be spread to other patients, so you will need to be admitted to either the isolation ward (F12) or transferred to a single side room. This may be on a different ward. Staff will wear aprons and gloves when caring for you and be strict with hand washing.

How long will I have to stay in isolation?

As long as the treatment is working and you have been passing formed stools for at least three days (although this could be longer), the risk of infection is reduced, and we can consider moving you out of isolation. The doctors and nurses caring for you will monitor your condition closely and keep you informed of your progress.

What can I do to help myself and protect others?

- Ensure that you wash your hands well with soap and water after using the toilet and before meals. If you are not mobile nursing staff will provide you with detergent wipes or soap and water.
- Do not sit on other patient's beds and avoid sharing things such as toiletries, food, or other items.
- Bedding maybe changed more frequently.
- Although you may not feel like it, do try to eat and drink as much as you are able to prevent dehydration.
- If you have any worries, please do not hesitate to speak to the nursing or medical staff caring for you. Everything will be treated with the strictest confidence.

Visiting

We recommend that you limit the number of visitors you have whilst you have the infection. Children under the age of 12 may visit following discussion with the nurse in charge. Visitors are asked to wash their hands with soap and water on entry and exit to the unit/side room. If visitors are assisting with personal care, gloves and aprons

will be provided. Please do not bring in any perishable food products. Please adhere to the visiting times and note that they may vary on different wards.

West Suffolk Hospital takes all cases of C. difficile very seriously and regrets that any preventable cases occur. If you develop C. difficile during your admission to hospital, or if you are diagnosed with the infection following a recent admission to hospital (within the previous 28 days) the infection prevention team will review your case on behalf of the Trust using the patient safety investigation review framework, which may lead to a review with the doctors and nurses who cared for you.

Additional information

You can find additional information regarding C. difficile on the following web site.

[Clostridium difficile \(C. diff\) - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities, please visit the website for AccessAble (formerly DisabledGo) <https://www.accessable.co.uk>



© West Suffolk NHS Foundation Trust