

## What is C. difficile?

Clostridium difficile (C. difficile) (say: SEE-diff-iss-SEEL) is a type of bacteria (germ). It is found in a person's bowels (guts). C. difficile makes a toxin that can cause diarrhea. It can also cause more serious conditions such as colitis.

Most often, C. difficile infection happens in people who are taking antibiotics. Healthy people have many different types of bacteria in their bowels. Most of these are "good" bacteria that help control other, harmful bacteria. Taking antibiotics can kill some of the good bacteria. When there are fewer of these good bacteria in the bowels, C. difficile can grow.

## Symptoms of C. difficile infection

People who have a C. difficile infection may have the following symptoms:

- Watery diarrhea, which may also have blood in it.
- Fever.
- Not feeling hungry.
- Feeling sick to the stomach (nausea).
- Pain or tenderness in the belly.
- Healthy people usually do not get C. difficile infections. People are more likely to get C. difficile infections if either of the following is true:
  - They have other illnesses or conditions that mean they need to take antibiotics for a long time.
  - They are elderly.

## Your child will need to give a stool sample to see if she has C. difficile

A stool (feces or poo) sample is needed to test for C. difficile. Your child's nurse will send it to the lab. The results usually take a few days to come back.

## Usually, C. difficile gets better on its own

People with mild symptoms do not need treatment for C. difficile. The symptoms usually clear up once the person stops taking antibiotics.

If the person's symptoms are more serious, she may need medicine. Some people may become dehydrated. This means their bodies do not have enough water to work properly. They may need to take fluids directly into their blood through an intravenous line (IV).

### **How C. difficile is spread**

C. difficile bacteria are found in stool. A person can become infected if she touches items or surfaces that have a small amount of stool on them and then touches her mouth. Even if a surface does not look dirty, it can still have bacteria on it.

Health care workers can spread the bacteria to other patients or surfaces if they do not wash their hands or clean equipment after caring for a patient with C. difficile.

Streitenberger, Laurie. "Clostridium Difficile (C. difficile)." – *About Kids Health*. The Hospital for Sick Children, 6 Nov. 2009. Web. 29 Dec. 2015. <http://www.aboutkidshealth.ca/En/HealthAZ/ConditionsandDiseases/InfectiousDiseases/Pages/Clostridium-difficile-C-difficile.aspx>.