

IDRS Infectious Disease Reporting System

Disease Reporting 24 Hours a Day

Columbus Public Health and Franklin County Public Health

C. DIFFICILE

Clostridium difficile is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis. It is a common cause of antibiotic associated diarrhea. This is when the antibiotics kill the normal bacteria in a person's intestinal tract and also the *C. difficile* bacteria to flourish instead.

Symptoms

- Watery, strong smelling diarrhea (at least three bowel movements per day for two or more days)
- fever
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal pain/tenderness

Transmission

- People in good health usually don't get *C. difficile* disease. They may carry the bacteria without having symptoms. The risk of getting sick from *C. difficile* increases in people who:
 - Are taking antibiotics
 - Recently had intestinal surgery
 - Stay in a health care setting for a long time
 - Have other serious illnesses
 - Have a weakened immune system (due to HIV infection, cancer, organ transplants, etc.)
 - Are elderly
- The bacteria are found in the stool (poop). People can become infected if they touch contaminated items or surfaces and then touch their mouth or nose.
- *C. difficile* disease is often passed from person to person on hands or objects in healthcare settings.

Treatment

- *C. difficile* disease is diagnosed based on a stool test and symptoms together.
- This infection is generally treated for 10 days with antibiotics prescribed by a healthcare provider.
- A healthcare provider may recommend stopping other kinds of antibiotics that may be making the infection worse. People should take antibiotics exactly as the doctor recommends.

Prevention

- Always wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the restroom and before eating. Make sure any health care personnel who take care of you or your loved ones wash their hands.
- Alcohol hand sanitizers may not kill *C. difficile* as well as other bacteria. Use soap and water to clean hands after contact with someone sick from *C. difficile*.
- Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household disinfectants.
- *C. difficile* disease often occurs when people take antibiotics. Avoid taking antibiotics for infections caused by viruses such as colds or flu. Antibiotics do not work for these infections and may cause other problems. Always take antibiotics exactly as the health care provider directs.

All information is general in nature and is not intended to be used as a substitute for appropriate professional advice.



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