

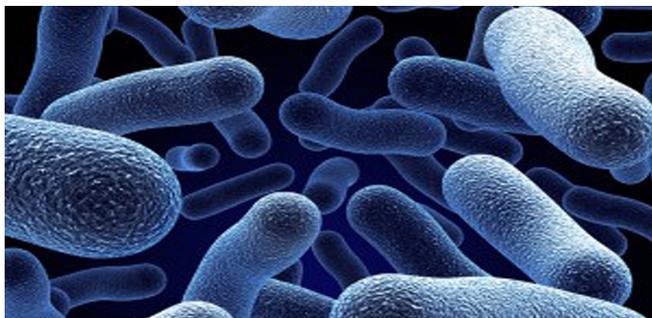


# IPC NEWS

September 2017

Edition 3: C.diff

## Clostridium difficile



### What is C.diff?

Clostridium difficile (also known as C.difficile, C.diff) is a bacterium that can infect the bowel and cause diarrhoea. It most commonly affects people who have recently been treated with antibiotics.

C.diff infections can be unpleasant and can sometimes cause serious bowel problems, but can usually be treated with another course of antibiotics.

### Signs and symptoms - may include one or all of the following:

- sometimes people say that C.diff has a distinctive smell... well not always. (People may just have diarrhoea that has not resolved). **C.diff doesn't always whiff!**
- signs of dehydration, such as a dry mouth, headaches and peeing less often than normal
- diarrhoea
- feeling sick
- painful tummy cramps
- a high temperature
- loss of appetite and weight loss
- abnormal blood results ie raised WCC CRP

### What is diarrhoea?

Sounds a silly question doesn't it! But is it? It's important to remember the lab will only process a stool for C.diff testing if it takes the shape of the sample pot, ie **watery diarrhoea that is a type 5 - 7 on the Bristol Stool Chart that is not attributable to any other cause.**

### Bristol Stool Chart

1		Separate hard lumps, like nuts (hard to pass)
2		Sausage shaped but lumpy
3		Like a sausage but with cracks on the surface
4		Like a sausage or snake, smooth & soft
5		Soft blobs with clear-cut edges (passed easily)
6		Fluffy pieces with ragged edges, a mushy stool
7		Watery, no solid pieces <b>ENTIRELY LIQUID</b>

## So what causes C.diff?

### When people have had antibiotics

This is because antibiotics may affect the normal balance of bacteria in the bowel allowing C.diff bacteria to grow in large numbers which causes diarrhoea.

### Cross infection

This is because the bacteria produce germs (spores) which leave the body in an infected person's diarrhoea. When people do not wash their hands properly after visiting the toilet or touching contaminated surfaces, they can spread C.diff to other people. C.diff can survive on surfaces for a very long time.

## Did you know?

**Loperamide** (Imodium) treatment should not be used in symptomatic C. diff infections, as it increases the risk of toxin retention, this is because it is thought that loperamide may slow down the rate at which the toxins produced by the bacteria are cleared from the gut.

**PPIs** ie **omeprazole** and **lanzoprazole** neutralise the gastric juices proven to kill C.diff.

## Healthcare staff

- if you suspect your patient may have a C.diff infection, contact the patient's GP
- ensure hand washing is performed adhering to the 'WHO 5 moments' of hand hygiene



- ensure anyone who has diarrhoea stays at home until they have been free from diarrhoea for at least 48 hours
- ensure any patient with C.diff has an alert placed on their health records
- advise your patient to finish the entire course of any antibiotics they're prescribed, even if they feel better, advise to drink plenty of fluids to avoid dehydration and eat plain foods such as soup, rice, pasta and bread and don't take anti-diarrhoeal medication, as this can stop the infection being cleared from their body

## Who is more at risk of C.diff?

- people over the age of 65 years
- anyone whose immune system is weakened
- anyone who has recently been in hospital or who lives in a care home
- those who have had recent antibiotic treatment

## Prescribers "stop and think"

- **always** follow Wirral Antimicrobial Guidelines and ensure you are following the most recent edition
- **review PPIs** on a regular basis. Is it still required? Could the dose be reduced?
- **do not** prescribe loperamide when an infective cause for diarrhoea has not been ruled out
- **send a stool sample**, for any person that has risk factors for C.diff
- **be aware of risk factors** for C.diff and past medical history
- **ensure** any person with C.diff has an alert placed on their health records



## What would you like to see in our next newsletter?

Let us know by email to [IPC.wirralct@nhs.net](mailto:IPC.wirralct@nhs.net) or call 0151 604 7750.

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