



Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Frequently Asked Questions

## General Information about *Clostridium Difficile* Infections

Released August 2004; Updated 07/22/2005

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### Questions and Answers

#### What is *Clostridium difficile* (*C. Difficile*)?

*Clostridium difficile* [klo-STRID-ee-um dif-uh-SEEL] is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis.

#### What are *C. difficile* diseases?

They are diseases that result from *C. difficile* infections such as Colitis, more serious intestinal conditions, sepsis, and rarely death.

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#### What are the symptoms of *C. difficile* disease?

Symptoms include:

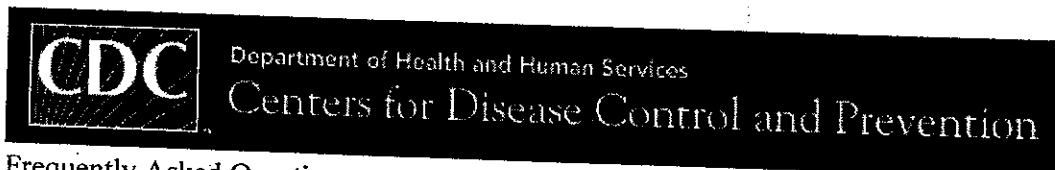
- watery diarrhea (at least three bowel movements per day for two or more days)
- fever
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal pain/tenderness

#### How is *C. difficile* disease treated?

*C. difficile* is generally treated for 10 days with antibiotics prescribed by your healthcare provider. The drugs are effective and appear to have few side-effects.

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#### *How do people get *C. difficile* disease?*



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#### How is C. difficile disease treated?

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#### How do people get C. difficile disease?

People in good health usually don't get *C. difficile* disease. People who have other illnesses or conditions requiring prolonged use of antibiotics and the elderly are at greater risk of acquiring this disease. The bacteria are found in the feces. People can become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then touch their mouth or mucous membranes. Healthcare workers can spread the bacteria to other patients or contaminate surfaces through hand contact.

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### What should I do to prevent the spread of *C. difficile* to others?

If you are infected you can spread the disease to others. However, only people that are hospitalized or on antibiotics are likely to become ill. For safety precautions you may do the following to reduce the chance of spread to others:

- wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the restroom and before eating;
- clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household detergent/disinfectants.

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### What should I do if I think I have *C. difficile* disease?

See your healthcare provider.

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### Where can I get more information?

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also has [information for healthcare providers](#) and more information about [Gastrointestinal Infections in Healthcare Settings](#).

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National Center for Preparedness, Detection, and Control of Infectious Diseases

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**CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION**  
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