

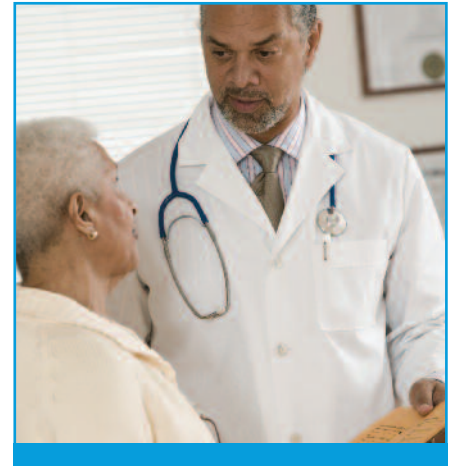
# Clostridium difficile (C. diff)



## What Is C. diff?

*Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*) is a type of bacteria that normally lives in your intestines. Sometimes, *C. diff* grows out of control and can make you sick. Common causes of *C. diff* infection include:

- Taking one or more antibiotics for a long time
- Cancer treatments
- A hospital stay
- Living in a nursing home
- Surgery on your stomach or intestines
- A lowered immune system, such as from old age, HIV, or cancer



## What Are the Warning Signs of C. diff?

- Frequent, watery bowel movements (diarrhea) that last for 2 days or more
- Fever
- Feeling sick to your stomach
- Stomach pain



## How Is C. diff Diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask about your symptoms and medical history.
- You will be asked to give a sample of your stool to check for signs of *C. diff*.
- In some cases, your doctor will check your colon, which is a part of your intestines. You may need a colonoscopy or sigmoidoscopy test. These tests use a flexible tube with a camera to look inside of your colon. Other tests, like X-rays or CT scans, can also take pictures of the colon.



## How Is C. diff Treated?

- If you are taking an antibiotic, your doctor may tell you to stop taking it. You will need to take a different antibiotic to treat the *C. diff* infection.
- Drink plenty of water and fluids to stay hydrated.
- Probiotics may help *C. diff* from coming back if taken with prescribed medicines. Probiotics are "good" bacteria. You can buy over-the-counter probiotics at the drug store. They are also in certain foods, like yogurt.
- In some severe cases, surgery may be needed to take out infected parts of the colon.
- If *C. diff* does not go away, or comes back often, you may need a stool transplant. This means stool from a healthy person may be transferred to your colon. This can help stop *C. diff* from growing out of control.
- *C. diff* is spread by touching a surface or a person that has been infected with *C. diff*. You can prevent the spread of *C. diff* by:
  - Washing your hands with soap and water often. Hand sanitizer does not kill *C. diff*.
  - Cleaning surfaces in bathrooms and kitchens with bleach-based products.
  - Not using antibiotics unless recommended by your doctor.

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## Questions for My Doctor

- If taking antibiotics caused me to have *C. diff*, why should I take more antibiotics?
- How long will it take before I feel better?
- Will my friends or family get *C. diff* when they visit me?
- How can I make sure I do not get *C. diff* again?
- Can I take probiotics to help prevent *C. diff*?
- Do I need to eat a special diet?



## Bottom Line

- *C. diff* is a type of bacteria that infects the intestines. You may be at risk for *C. diff* infection if you have taken antibiotics, are being treated for cancer, are staying in a hospital, live in a nursing home, have had surgery on your stomach or intestines, or if you have a weakened immune system.
- Symptoms of *C. diff* include frequent diarrhea for more than a few days, feeling sick to your stomach, stomach pain, and fever.
- Your doctor will diagnose *C. diff* after asking about your symptoms and testing a sample of your stool. In some cases, your doctor may order tests to look at your colon.
- If you are taking an antibiotic, your doctor may stop it or change it. Your doctor will prescribe a different type of antibiotic to treat the *C. diff* infection.
- Other treatments are available for severe cases of *C. diff* that do not go away with usual treatment.

## For More Information

- **U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:**  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id\\_CdiffFAQ\\_general.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_CdiffFAQ_general.html)
- **National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases:**  
<http://digestive.niddk.nih.gov.proxy1.lib.tju.edu/ddiseases/pubs/diarrhea/>
- **MedlinePlus:** [www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/clostridiumdifficileinfections.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/clostridiumdifficileinfections.html)

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