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Clostridium difficile
(C. diff)

FOR MORE INFORMATION,
CONTACT INFECTION CONTROL
AT 416.762.7316, EXT. 2238.

We make it possible.

Clostridium Difficile

(*C. diff*)

WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?

CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE, also known as *C. diff*, is a bacteria that can be found in the bowel. It can cause diarrhea and for some people may cause other serious health problems.

C. diff produces spores that can survive in a hospital environment and are killed only with certain disinfectants.

HOW IS *C. DIFF* SPREAD?

It can be spread through contact by hands, equipment or furniture (such as bedrails, toilet seats, wheelchairs and bed side tables) that are contaminated with the bacteria and the spores.

People become infected when they touch a surface covered with *C. diff* and then touch their mouths.

WHAT IS A *C. DIFF* INFECTION?

Most cases of *C. diff* infection occur in patients taking antibiotics. Antibiotics can kill the good bacteria in a person's bowel, causing *C. diff* (if present in the bowel) to overgrow and produce toxins. These toxins can damage the bowel and cause diarrhea.

In some cases, the diarrhea may be mild and can improve with treatment; however, it can potentially be more serious.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON SYMPTOMS?

- Watery diarrhea
- Abdominal pain and tenderness
- Fever
- Nausea
- Loss of appetite

WHO IS AT RISK OF A *C. DIFF* INFECTION?

The risk for a *C. diff* infection increases in:

- Patients with multiple hospital stays
- Patients with recent antibiotic treatment
- Patients who are 65 years of age or older
- Patients who have had bowel surgery

WHAT TESTS ARE DONE TO DETERMINE A *C. DIFF* INFECTION?

If a patient has symptoms of a *C. diff* infection, a stool sample will be collected to see if the toxins are present.

CAN *C. DIFF* BE TREATED?

Yes, antibiotics can be used to treat a *C. diff* infection but sometimes the diarrhea comes back and may have to be treated again.

HOW CAN THE SPREAD OF *C. DIFF* BE PREVENTED IN A HOSPITAL SETTING?

If a patient has a *C. diff* infection, its spread can be prevented by:

- Accommodating the patient in a private room with a private washroom
- Placing the patient on contact precautions and posting a precautionary sign outside their room

- Wearing a protective gown and gloves when having contact with the patient or their environment, inside the patient's room
- Cleaning and disinfecting patient care equipment after each use
- Practicing proper hand hygiene:
 - Use an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) before entering the patient's room
 - Use soap and water when leaving the patient's room
- Restricting activities outside the patient's room while the patient has symptoms
- Cleaning and disinfecting the patient's room and washroom twice per day

HOW CAN VISITORS BE PROTECTED?

People who are visiting a patient with a *C. diff* infection should:

- Follow instructions on the contact precautions sign posted on the door of the patient's room
- Clean their hands:
 - Use an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR) before entering the patient's room
 - Use soap and water when leaving the patient's room
- Use a gown and gloves:
 - Put on gown and gloves before entering the patient's room
 - Remove gown and gloves before leaving the patient's room
- Refrain from sitting on the patient's bed
- Do not use the patient's washroom; use the washroom designated for visitors
- Do not eat in the patient's room
- Refrain from visiting other patients
- Avoid bringing children to the hospital to visit while the patient is on contact precautions