

## *Clostridium difficile*

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*Clostridium difficile*, also known as *C. difficile* or “C. diff”, is bacteria that can infect the bowel and cause diarrhoea.

The infection most commonly affects people who have recently been treated with antibiotics. It can spread easily to others.

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

### Symptoms of a *C. difficile* infection

Symptoms of a *C. difficile* infection usually develop when you're taking antibiotics, or when you have finished taking them within the last few weeks.

The most common symptoms are:

- diarrhoea several times a day
- fever
- loss of appetite
- feeling sick
- tummy pain

In some cases, you may have signs of dehydration.

### How you get *C. difficile*

*C. difficile* bacteria are found in the digestive system of about 1 in every 30 healthy adults.

The bacteria often live harmlessly because other bacteria normally found in the bowel keep it under control.

But some antibiotics can interfere with the balance of bacteria in the bowel, which can cause the *C. difficile* bacteria to multiply and produce toxins that make the person ill.

When this happens, *C. difficile* can spread easily to other people because the bacteria are passed out of the body in the person's diarrhoea.

Once out of the body, the bacteria turn into resistant cells called spores.

These can survive for long periods on hands, surfaces (such as toilets), objects and clothing unless they're thoroughly cleaned, and can infect someone else if they get into their mouth.

# C. difficile factsheet

This leaflet gives info on *Clostridium difficile*, also known as *C. difficile* or “C. diff”, a bacteria that can infect the bowel and cause diarrhoea.

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## Details

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Health Professionals and general public

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