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NHS

United Lincolnshire
Hospitals
NHS Trust

Clostridioides difficile

(Formerly known as *Clostridium difficile*)

Infection Prevention Team
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Patient-centred ♦ Respect ♦ Excellence ♦ Safety ♦ Compassion

What is *Clostridioides difficile*?

Clostridioides difficile is a bacteria that is found in the bowel of about 3% of healthy adults. It is, however, a main cause of antibiotic associated diarrhoea in susceptible people. Diarrhoea occurs if specific antibiotics disrupt the balance of “good” bacteria in the bowel, allowing the *Clostridioides difficile* bacteria to multiply and produce toxins.

This is called **Antibiotic Associated Diarrhoea**

Most people are only mildly affected by these toxins, but symptoms can range from mild diarrhoea to severe inflammation of the gut (colitis). In a worst case, it can lead to perforation of the bowel and subsequent infection and complications.

The bacteria creates spores that are difficult to destroy using general cleaning products and can live in the environment for a long time. It is therefore easy to pass between people.

How is *Clostridioides difficile* passed on between people?

Older people and those already ill or with a low immunity can be particularly affected. A person with *Clostridioides difficile* infection can excrete many spores in their diarrhoea, which can contaminate the environment including the room, bed, toilet or commodes. It can therefore be passed on directly to other vulnerable people or through the environment.

How is *Clostridioides difficile* treated?

For patients with mild illness, stopping any antibiotics and increasing fluid intake normally leads to rapid improvement. For patients with more severe illness, specific antibiotics will be prescribed to destroy *Clostridioides difficile*.

How is *Clostridioides difficile* managed in hospital?

If someone develops *Clostridioides difficile* infection the following steps are put in place to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other patients. The patient will be nursed in a single room with their own toilet or commode.

Hospital staff will:

- Wear disposable aprons and gloves when providing care in the room and manage used bedding from the room as infected.
- They will ensure they wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water when they leave the room
- The environment will be cleaned daily and medical equipment cleaned after each use with disinfectant
- The room will be thoroughly cleaned following discharge of the patient

What you can do:

You can help to avoid the transmission of *infection* by:

- Washing your hands after using the toilet or commode and before you eat
- Keeping your bed space tidy and uncluttered to make cleaning easier for ward staff
- Letting the ward staff know if you see any dust or dirt
- Asking staff and visitors to wash their hands before and after seeing you
- Asking visitors not to sit on your bed (chairs for visitors are available on every ward) or to use patients' toilets
- Not sharing items with other patients unless they have been cleaned

What the hospital is doing

The prevention of infection is a priority for United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust. To prevent *Clostridioides difficile* infections, we:

- Train all staff how to wash their hands and clean equipment correctly
- Ensure staff are “bare below the elbows” and wash their hands before and after each time they touch a patient or the patient’s environment
- Screen patients for *Clostridioides difficile* if they are admitted with or develop diarrhoea
- Isolate patients who have been found to have *Clostridioides difficile* in a side room and provide treatment if required
- Monitor standards of hygiene in all wards and departments
- Encourage visitors to wash their hands before and after visiting wards (hand hygiene stations (alcohol gel) are found outside every ward)

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse for advice or ask to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention Team.

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.

If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk