

## Homerton prevention plan

The hospital has a detailed treatment plan for patients with C.difficile, this includes:

- isolation of patients into a side room on the ward or to another ward. This helps reduce the risk of patients with diarrhoea unintentionally spreading the infection
- disinfecting and cleaning rooms and equipment with chlorine (bleach)
- staff following strict hand washing with soap and water when looking after infected patients
- following strict antibiotic prescribing policy and practices

Hands must be washed with soap and water after visiting someone with C.difficile diarrhoea

## Advice and Information

### Advocacy

We have an in-house health advocacy service for patients and carers who do not speak or read English.

### Patient Advice and Liaison Team (PALS)

PALS can provide information and support to patients and carers and will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries. Leaflets are available on the wards.

## Useful Contacts

If you have any further queries in relation to C.difficile or infection control and prevention please ask one of the nursing staff to contact one of the infection control nurses or contact 020 8510 7557 directly.

Further information including all hospitals' C.difficile rates can also be obtained from the Health Protection Agency website

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

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# Clostridium difficile

## What is C.difficile?

Clostridium difficile (C.difficile or C.diff) is a bacterium that is present naturally in the gut of some adults and children. C.difficile does not cause any problems in healthy people. However, C.difficile can cause illness when certain antibiotics used to treat other health conditions disturb the balance of natural bacteria in the gut. When this happens, C.difficile bacteria can multiply and cause symptoms such as diarrhoea and fever.

## How is C.difficile spread?

The infection can spread from person to person, as those suffering from C.difficile produce spores in the diarrhoea. The spores are able to survive for a long time and can contaminate the surrounding environment, such as toilets, bedclothes, and towels. The spores can be picked up by hand to mouth contact and remain in the gut. Some people may then go on to develop C.difficile diarrhoea.

## Symptoms

Those suffering from C.difficile may have:

- mild to severe diarrhoea
- fever
- loss of appetite
- sickness
- abdominal pain or tenderness

## Those more at risk

The following people are at high risk of developing of C.difficile associated diarrhoea:

- elderly people – more than 80% of cases are reported in the over 65 year age group
- patients who have a weakened immune system, for example following chemotherapy
- patients who have had repeated enemas and/or gut surgery
- those being treated with antibiotics, which may disturb the balance of normal bacteria in the gut.

## Diagnosis

It is difficult to diagnose on the basis of symptoms alone, therefore a sample of the infected person's faeces is sent to the laboratory to test for the presence of C.difficile toxins.

## Treatment

C.difficile is treated with specific antibiotics and most patients make a full recovery. There is a risk that some patients may experience further episodes of C.difficile, this is known as a relapse and happens in approximately 20 to 30% of patients.

## Preventing spread of infection

If you have been diagnosed with C.difficile:

- you will be moved into an isolation area to prevent you spreading the infection to others
- make sure you wash your hands with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before eating.

## Visiting someone in hospital who has C.difficile

When you visit someone in hospital with C.difficile diarrhoea you should:

- put on a plastic apron
- wash your hands with soap and water before and following any contact with the infected person.
- not eat or drink in the same room as the infected person.
- speak to a member of staff for further advice if you have recently taken antibiotics or you fall into one of the risk groups.

## Discharge

Patients with C.difficile can go home when they feel well enough and the doctors are satisfied with their recovery, this would usually be when the diarrhoea has stopped or is improving. It is important to continue good hand-washing hygiene using soap and water following use of the toilet and before eating meals.