

# Infection Control Department

## Clostridium difficile

### Information for patients, relatives and visitors

#### 1. What is Clostridium difficile?

*Clostridium difficile* is a bacterium (bug) which causes diarrhoea, sometimes with abdominal pain and vomiting. It often occurs following treatment with antibiotics.

Most often it affects elderly people and those with other health problems.

The symptoms range from mild diarrhoea for a few days, which stops on its own, to frequent offensive stools with mucous and sometimes blood.

#### 2. How do staff find out if I have Clostridium difficile?

If you have diarrhoea for more than 24 hours we will take a stool specimen and send it to the laboratory for testing. The result should be available after about 24 hours.

#### 3. Can it be treated?

Yes. Sometimes stopping the antibiotics is sufficient. In more severe cases a specific antibiotic tablet will be given for seven to ten days. Symptoms usually subside after two to three days.

#### 4. How do we stop it spreading?

The bacterium is found in large numbers in the stools but it can also live in dust, bed sheets and on surfaces, so your room should be cleaned daily, with a specific chlorine-based cleaning agent. It is advisable that your nightwear and bed linen should be changed daily or when soiled.

**Hand washing (rather than using alcohol gel) is also necessary to prevent the spread of infection. Alcohol handrub is ineffective if the patient is suffering from *Clostridium difficile*.**

#### 5. Do I need to be in a single room?

If you are mobile and able to get to the toilet, you may be nursed in the general ward **only** if no side room is available. If you are in the general ward we will need to check every day in case your situation changes.

However, if you are not able to get to the toilet independently and have frequent diarrhoea, then we will nurse you in a single room. This will give you more privacy, especially when symptoms are at their most distressing. You will have your own commode close at hand.

This will also help to prevent the spread of the infection to other patients who may be more vulnerable than yourself.

## 6. Can people still visit me and can they catch *Clostridium difficile*?

Visitors may still come and see you. Healthy people are at very little risk of catching *Clostridium difficile*. It is not a problem to children and pregnant women.

There is a need for visitors to wear gloves and aprons.

If people are visiting other patients they must see the non-infectious patient first.

Hands should be washed thoroughly on leaving the side room.

## 7. What about my personal laundry?

If you are suffering from diarrhoea due to *Clostridium difficile*, you should use only hospital linen and nightwear. However, if you choose to wear your own clothes they should be taken home daily, by relatives and washed separately at temperatures above 60°C.

## 8. Can it come back?

Unfortunately yes. Further courses of antibiotics may cause the symptoms to return. Sometimes it will be necessary to give a longer course of treatment to eliminate the problem.

## 9. How will I know when the *Clostridium difficile* has gone?

When the diarrhoea stops, the course of antibiotics has been finished and when your normal bowel habit returns, we consider the infection has gone. There is **no need** to send a further specimen to check.

## 10. Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

Please speak to any of the ward staff who are caring for you. If they are unable to answer your questions, or if you require further information, the Infection Control Nurses will visit you on the ward, or are available via the hospital switchboard.

### Infection Control

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For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169

### Help with this leaflet:



If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio format, please ask the department to contact Patient Information: 01223 216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Polish

Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem Informacji Pacjenta (Patient Information) pod numerem telefonu: 01223 216032 lub pod adresem [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Portuguese

Se precisar desta informação noutra língua, em impressão de letras grandes ou formato áudio, por favor peça ao departamento que contacte a secção de Informação aos Doentes (Patient Information) pelo telefone 01223 216032 ou através do e-mail [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Arabic

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### Cantonese

如您需以另一語言版本、特大字體或錄音形式索取本資料，請要求部門聯絡病人諮詢服務：電話 01223 216032，電郵地址 [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Turkish

Eğer bu bilgileri başka bir dilde veya büyük baskılı veya sesli olarak isterseniz, lütfen bulunduğunuz bölümdeki görevlilere söyleyin Hasta Bilgilendirme servisini arasinlar: 01223 216032 veya [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Urdu

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی دیگر زبان میں، بڑے الفاظ میں یا آڈیو طریقہ سے درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی اس شعبہ سے پیشینٹ انفارمیشن سے ذریعہ رابطہ کرنے کی درخواست کریں: 01223 216032 یا [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)

### Bengali

আপনি যদি এই তথ্য অন্য কোন ভাষায়, বড় অক্ষরে বা অডিও রেকর্ডিং পোতে চান তাহলে 'প্যাশেন্ট ইনফরমেশান' এর সঙ্গে 01223 216032 নম্বরে ফোন করে বা [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk) ঠিকানায় ই-মেইল করে যোগাযোগ করার জন্য ডিপার্টমেন্টটিতে অনুরোধ জানান।

### Document history

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Contact number	01223 217497
Publish/Review date	February 2010/February 2012
File name	Clostridium difficile.doc
Version number/Ref	5/PIN0076