

# Infection Prevention

## Quick Guide: *C. difficile*

*Clostridioides difficile* (also known as *C. difficile* or *C. diff*) is a type of bacteria that causes diarrhea, fever, and belly pain. Sometimes, people with *C. diff* do not have any symptoms. The elderly, people who take antibiotics, and those who have extended stays in healthcare settings such as nursing homes are at higher risk for getting *C. diff*. *C. diff* is transmitted by: (1) direct contact with an infected person or (2) touching contaminated surfaces and then putting your unwashed hands in your mouth.

Point your phone's camera at the QR code for a *C. diff* fact sheet from CDC.



## Infection Prevention Checklist



1. **Resident Placement and Transmission-Based Precautions:** Place residents with suspected or confirmed *C. difficile* on Contact Precautions in a private room with their own and bathroom. If there are no private rooms, you may cohort residents with the same illness together, taking into consideration the residents' multidrug-resistant organism status.
  - a. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment.
    - i. **Gown and gloves** upon room entry
      1. Always perform hand hygiene after removing gloves
  - b. In outbreaks, consider using soap and water instead of alcohol-based hand sanitizer for **hand hygiene** after removing gloves while caring for residents with *C. difficile*.
    - i. Some facilities choose to recommend washing with soap and water after removing gloves while caring for any resident with suspected or confirmed *C. diff*.
    - ii. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer does not kill *C. diff*
  - c. Use **dedicated or disposable equipment** (e.g., stethoscope, blood pressure cuff) when possible. If equipment must be reused, clean and disinfect it before use on another person.
  - d. Restrict ill residents to their room, except for medically necessary care. Meals should also be served in the room.
  - e. Continue precautions at least until diarrhea ceases.
2. **Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection:** Ensure environmental disinfection products being used for this resident's room are registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) with a kill claim against *C. diff* (List K: <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-k-antimicrobial-products-registered-epa-claims-against-clostridium>). Remember different illnesses may require different disinfectant products.
3. **Surveillance:** Monitor additional residents and staff for signs and symptoms of illness.
  - a. Test promptly if compatible signs/symptoms develop.
4. **Use antibiotics appropriately** to help reduce the risk of residents developing *C. diff*.
5. **Partner with public health:** Report a suspected outbreak to your local health department (<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-department-locator/>)
  - a. Outbreak = number of cases is above your facility baseline (e.g., 3 or more cases of residents with diarrhea within a 72-hour period)

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6. **Communication:** When a resident with *C. diff* transfers, notify the new facility about their *C. diff* status so that appropriate prevention strategies can remain in place. Example of an interfacility communication form (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/pdfs/toolkits/Interfacility-IC-Transfer-Form-508.pdf>
7. Additional measures to take during an outbreak:
  - a. Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfecting surfaces
    - i. Unit level cleaning twice a day
    - ii. Frequently touched surfaces three times a day
  - b. Consider discontinuing group activities.
  - c. Cohort staff to care for all ill or all well residents.
  - d. Increase auditing of hand hygiene, PPE use, and environmental cleaning.

## *C. difficile*: How to Share the News



1. **To the resident and those authorized to receive health information:**  
You (or your loved one) have tested positive for *C. diff*. *C. diff* is a germ (bacteria) that can spread from person to person. We will be taking extra precautions like wearing a gown and gloves and giving you care in your room, whenever possible, to make sure the germ doesn't spread to others. We will be cleaning your room frequently. We will also be washing our hands a lot and encourage you to do the same.
2. **To healthcare workers:** This resident is now positive for *C. diff* and requires Contact Precautions. You must wear gown and gloves every time you go into the room, dedicate equipment, when possible (or clean and disinfect equipment before use on another resident), and always do good hand hygiene with soap and water [if facility policy]. *C. diff* can cause healthcare outbreaks. This puts all our residents at risk, so it is important to be consistent with these infection prevention measures.

## Additional Resources

CDC *C. difficile* website (<https://www.cdc.gov/cdiff/index.html>):

- Prevention strategies
- FAQs, guidelines, and resources for healthcare professionals

