

# Fact Sheet: Clostridium Difficile (*C. difficile*)

## What is Clostridium Difficile?

*C. Difficile* is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious conditions affecting the bowel like colitis. *C. difficile* may also cause a serious blood infection and rarely death. It is rare to have *C. difficile* that is not associated with antibiotic therapy or hospitalization. *C. difficile* can be isolated from the soil and is commonly present in the environment.

## What are the symptoms?

- Watery diarrhea (at least 3 loose stools per day for 2 or more days)
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain or tenderness
- Bloody diarrhea with mucus

## How is the disease treated?

*C. difficile* is usually treated for 10 days with an antibiotic prescribed by a healthcare provider.

*This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.*

## How is it spread?

People who have other illnesses, have been on antibiotics frequently or for an extended period of time and the elderly are more likely to get *C. difficile*. The bacteria are found in feces. People can become infected by touching items or surfaces contaminated with feces and then touching their mouths or other mucous membranes such as eyes or nose. Health care workers can spread the disease by not practicing good hand washing techniques.

## How is it prevented?

Infected people can spread it to others. Usually, people who are hospitalized or on frequent antibiotics are likely to become ill. You can reduce the chance of spreading the disease by:

- Wash hands thoroughly with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom.
- Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens, and other frequently used areas on a regular basis with household disinfectants.
- Limit the use of antibiotics.

If you think you have *C. difficile* see your health care provider.

## Other resources:

GI Infection in the Health Care Settings  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id\\_gi.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_gi.html)

Information for Health Care Providers  
[www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id\\_cdifffaq\\_hcp.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_cdifffaq_hcp.html)

