



# Jackson County Health Department

## Clostridium Difficile

### (*C.difficile*)



#### What is Clostridium Difficile (*C. difficile*)?

*C. difficile* is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious conditions affecting the bowel, like colitis. The elderly and people with prolonged use of antibiotics are at a greater risk for *C. difficile* infections. *C. difficile* may also lead to a serious blood infection and rarely death. It is unusual 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.

#### How is *C.difficile* spread?

The contagious *C. difficile* bacteria are found in the feces of infected people. *C. difficile* spreads when a person touches an object or surface that is contaminated with infected feces and then touches his/her mouth, eyes or nose. Health care workers can spread the disease by not practicing good hand washing techniques.

#### How is *C.difficile* treated?

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

#### How can *C.difficile* be prevented?

- Take antibiotics as prescribed.
- Practice good hand washing techniques.
- Wash hands after using the bathroom yourself and after caring for someone with a diarrheal illness.
- Clean surfaces in frequently used areas, especially kitchens and bathrooms with a product from EPA List K, as not all cleaning agents are effective against *C. difficile*.

#### Symptoms of *C. difficile*:

- Watery diarrhea (at least 3 loose stools per day for 2 or more days)

- Fever, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal pain.

**If someone in your house has *C. diff* infection, focus on regularly cleaning items that you touch with your hands, including:**

- Doorknobs
- Electronics
- Refrigerator handles
- Toilet flushers and toilet seats

#### Laundry

##### What to wash

- Bed linens, towels, household linens
- Clothing, especially underwear

##### When to wash

- Before others use items that people with *C. diff* infection may have touched
- If items have visible poop (if present, rinse well before washing)


##### How to wash

- Use the hottest water that is safe for items.
- Use chlorine bleach if you can safely do so without damaging items.
- Consider wearing gloves while handling items.
- Always wash hands with soap and water after handling laundry, even if you wore gloves.

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[www.mijackson.org](http://www.mijackson.org)

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