



*Clostridium difficile* - a spore forming bacterium present in the stomach - can lead to fever and severe diarrhoea. Once excreted, it moves to other patients and surfaces through touch.

To win the fight against *C.diff*, wash your hands, and decontaminate the environment.

**Prevent the spread of *C.diff***  
**KEEP YOUR HANDS AND ENVIRONMENT CLEAN**

For more information on infection prevention and control in practice visit [www.healthcare2z.org](http://www.healthcare2z.org)



**Prevent the spread of *C.diff***  
**KEEP YOUR HANDS AND ENVIRONMENT CLEAN**

Wash your hands frequently throughout the day, especially after visiting the toilet and before eating.

Ensure all bathroom and kitchen surfaces are thoroughly cleaned with detergents and disinfectants, especially those where food is prepared and eaten.

In cases of known *Clostridium difficile* infection, use a chlorine-based cleaning agent to prevent the spread of any spores which may be surviving in the environment.

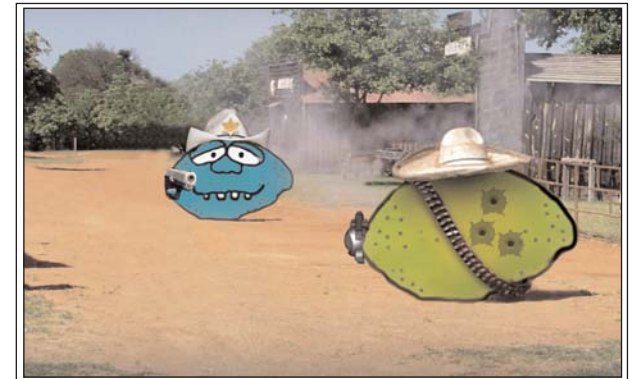
Wear disposable gloves when caring for an infected patient.



This content is not intended nor does it replace individual professional advice. Please contact a healthcare professional or seek advice from NHS Direct (0845 46 47) NHS Direct Wales (0845 46 47) or NHS 24 in Scotland (08454 24 24 24).



**THE GOOD,  
 THE BAD,  
 AND THE UGLY**



**Sometimes antibiotics disturb the natural balance in the gut and create an internal battle between 'good' and 'bad' bacteria.**

**It can get ugly!**



# CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE FACTS

***Clostridium difficile* can be found as part of the normal flora within the gut and is usually kept under control by other resident micro-organisms. Infection can occur when the balance of the normal flora is upset.**

## Transmission

*Clostridium difficile* is a bacterium which can be found as part of the normal flora in around 3% of adults and is usually kept under control by the other micro-organisms in the gut. Problems arise when the balance of the normal flora is upset, allowing the *Clostridium difficile* to take hold and cause an infection. This can occur, for example, when the individual takes antibiotics, leading to antibiotic-associated diarrhoea.

The bacteria can be transmitted from person-to-person as bacterial spores are excreted in the faeces of the infected individuals. These spores can survive in the environment for quite a long time and can be transmitted via contaminated hands or equipment, for example, bed pans, toilets.

## Incubation

The incubation period varies from person-to-person, depending on their age, health status and current medication.

## Illness

During antibiotic-associated diarrhoea, the *Clostridium difficile* takes over the flora within the gut. This can lead to explosive watery diarrhoea, abdominal pain and fever. A more severe form of the disease is antibiotic-associated colitis.

## Treatment

Treatment is usually with specific antibiotics. If much fluid has been lost, rehydration treatments should be used. Other treatments include the use of pro-biotic therapies which try to restore the balance of the natural flora in the gut.

## Exclusion

Standard infection and transmission-based precautions should be followed. Patients may be nursed in single room accommodation with en-suite facilities.

## Notification

Antibiotic-associated colitis is not a notifiable disease, however, mandatory surveillance for *Clostridium difficile*-associated infections is being carried out by the Health Protection Agency on behalf of the Department of Health.

## Complications

The general prognosis of antibiotic-associated diarrhoea is good, however, if left untreated it can progress to the more severe form of antibiotic-associated colitis.

## Prevention

Infections associated with *Clostridium difficile* can be prevented by stopping the transmission of the bacteria.

The routes of transmission can be broken by ensuring hands are thoroughly washed, especially after visiting the toilet and before eating. It is also important to ensure that surfaces in the bathroom and kitchen are cleaned with detergents and disinfectants. When caring for an infected patient, wear protective gloves and use a chlorine-based cleaning agent to prevent the spread of any surviving spores within the environment.

Antibiotics should only be prescribed when absolutely essential.