

Clostridioides difficile

Clostridioides difficile (also known as *C. diff*) is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and colitis. *C. diff* is a leading cause of healthcare-associated infections and can be life-threatening.



Impact



C. diff infection is estimated to cause almost **half a million** infections in the United States each year.¹



About **1 in 9** patients who get *C. diff* infection will get it again in the subsequent 2–8 weeks.²



One in 8 people aged 65 or older diagnosed with a healthcare-associated *C. diff* infection dies within a month.²

Risk



Patients are **up to 10 times more likely** to get *C. diff* infection while taking an antibiotic and during the month after, with longer courses of antibiotics potentially doubling their risk.^{3,4}



Recent (e.g., **within the last 3 months**) stay in healthcare settings, such as hospitals or nursing homes, also increases their risk.

65+

More than 70% of deaths in patients with *C. diff* infection occur in people aged 65 or older.²

1. Guh AY, Mu Y, Winston LG et al. N Engl J Med 2020;382:1320–30. DOI: 10.1056/NEJMoa1910215
2. *Clostridioides difficile* Infection (CDI) Surveillance. Emerging Infections Program : HAIC – Community Interface (HAIC). Available online: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthcare-associated-infections/php/haic-eip/cdiff.html>.
3. Zhang J, Chen L, Gomez-Simmonds A, et al. 2022. Antibiotic-Specific Risk for Community-Acquired *Clostridioides difficile* Infection in the United States from 2008 to 2020. Antimicrob Agents Chemother 66:e01129-22. DOI: 10.1128/aac.01129-22.
4. Brown KA, Langford B, Schwartz KL, et al. Antibiotic Prescribing Choices and Their Comparative *C. Difficile* Infection Risks: A Longitudinal Case-Cohort Study, Clinical Infectious Diseases, 2021 March; 72(5): 836–844. DOI: 10.1093/cid/ciaa124.

Spread

C. diff can spread by:



Touching contaminated surfaces or infected patients.



Not following recommended hand hygiene and infection control practices.



Not communicating a *C. diff* infection diagnosis when a patient is transferred.

Prevention

Healthcare professionals can:



Optimize antibiotic therapy to minimize the risk of *C. diff* infection.⁵



Assess patients with *C. diff* infection symptoms for appropriateness of testing.⁶



Identify and isolate patients with *C. diff* infection in private rooms.⁶



Adhere to recommended hand hygiene practices and contact precautions.⁶



Clean surfaces in rooms where patients with *C. diff* infection are treated with EPA-approved, spore-killing disinfectant (see [List K agent](#)).⁶



Communicate a *C. diff* infection diagnosis in transitions of care.

5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Clinical Guidance for *C. diff* Prevention in Acute Care Facilities, 2024. <https://www.cdc.gov/c-diff/hcp/clinical-guidance/index.html>.

6. Kociolek LK, Gerding DN, Carrico R, et al. Strategies to prevent *Clostridioides difficile* infections in acute-care hospitals: 2022 Update. *Infection Control & Hospital Epidemiology*. 2023;44(4):527-549. doi:10.1017/ice.2023.18