

Patient Records

The fact that you have had *Clostridium difficile* will be recorded on your electronic patient record.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward or hospital. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser as hand sanitisers are not suitable for use when dealing with patients who have symptoms of diarrhoea.

For infection prevention & control purposes and to keep you safe and well visitors are requested **not** to:

- Visit you if they are unwell
- Sit on your bed or use the patient toilets.
- Touch your wounds, or any medical devices, drips or catheters.

How can I find out more?

Contact the Infection Prevention & Control Department on:

Wycombe Hospital Tel: 01494 425456

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Tel: 01296 315337

Public Health England Tel: 0344 225 3861

Public Health England Website: <http://www.hpa.org.uk>

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

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What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Patient Information Leaflet

If you require a translation or alternative format of this leaflet please call Infection Prevention & Control 01296 315337.

What is *Clostridium difficile*?

Clostridium difficile is one of many different bacteria that can live in our bowel and rarely cause problems. An infection with *Clostridium difficile* is most often linked to taking antibiotics. Some antibiotics change the delicate balance of bacteria in our bowel, allowing *Clostridium difficile* to grow in number. *Clostridium difficile* infection can result in mild diarrhoea which resolves quickly. However, some infections can develop into a more severe illness with frequent offensive diarrhoea and abdominal pain. It is important therefore that you tell the staff looking after you if your symptoms are becoming worse.

How is a diagnosis made?

Diagnosis is made by sending a stool sample to the laboratory.

How will I be looked after?

It will be necessary to care for you in a single room while you have diarrhoea because of risk of spreading to other patients. Staff caring for you will wash their hands and wear gloves and aprons. Hands should be washed with soap and water as hand sanitiser is **not** effective against *Clostridium difficile*.

Can my visitors catch *Clostridium difficile*?

Healthy people very rarely get infected with *Clostridium difficile*. The greatest risk is to those who are frail, elderly or unwell (like other hospital patients). If frail visitors are planning to visit the ward please ask the nurses for advice. It is not normally necessary for visitors to wear gloves and aprons. However if visitors are having close contact with patients who are isolated (e.g. helping with washing and dressing) we recommend that they are worn whilst the patient is in a single room. It is important that visitors wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water when they arrive and before leaving your room. Please ask the nurses if you are unsure.

What can I do to speed up my recovery?

It is important that you wash your hands with soap and water before you eat or drink and after you have been to the toilet. Make sure that any food you have is covered or kept inside your locker (unless it needs to be in a fridge). It will help if you drink lots of fluid to avoid you becoming dehydrated. No anti-diarrhoeal drugs should be taken during the course of the infection because they can make the infection worse.

What happens when I stop having diarrhoea?

Once your diarrhoea is improving, it means the infection is settling. If your bowels have returned to normal it may be possible to move you out of a single room. The staff looking after you will let you know when this can happen.

Will it delay my discharge from hospital?

Your doctors will decide if you are well enough to go home. If you are waiting to be transferred to another hospital the transfer may be delayed until your symptoms have settled.

What happens if I have diarrhoea again?

Sometimes the diarrhoea can start again. This may be after you have gone home, or while you are still in hospital. It is not always possible to know what the exact cause of the recurrence of diarrhoea is. It can sometimes be as a result of the same infection, or for another reason. It is important to tell a doctor or nurse if your diarrhoea starts up again.

Who can I talk to?

If you have any questions about your condition, please talk to one of the nursing or medical staff.

What happens about washing my clothes?

If you have any soiled clothing, the nurses looking after you should put it in a plastic bag. Unfortunately we do not have facilities within the Trust to wash personal clothing so someone will have to do this for you. Healthy people are unlikely to be affected by *Clostridium difficile*, however we suggest the following actions are taken:

- It is best that this clothing is washed as a separate load to other items.
- The contents of the bag should be emptied straight into the washing machine and the plastic bag put into the rubbish bin.
- At this point hands should be washed with soap and water.
- A pre-wash can be used if needed to remove excessive soiling.
- You should use the hottest wash that will not damage the clothing.

What happens after I go home?

If you are a carrier, no special measures or treatment are required when you go home. If you are admitted to hospital, or see any other healthcare professional you should let the staff know that you are or have been a carrier.