

A photograph of a nurse and a patient in a hospital room. The nurse, a woman with brown hair wearing a light blue uniform, is smiling warmly at the patient. The patient, a Black woman, is lying in a hospital bed, also smiling. The background shows a typical hospital room with a blue chair, a nurse in the background, and medical equipment.

C. DIFFICILE – now you are going home



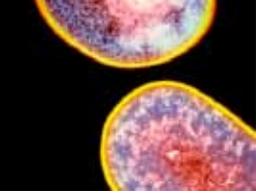
This leaflet is intended for people who have had *C. difficile* while in hospital and are now going home. It also contains important information for relatives and carers.

If you have been discharged from hospital because you are clinically well but are still on treatment for your *C. difficile* infection, it is important to complete the course of medication as recommended by your doctor.

Things you need to know

- There is a 20%–30% chance that the *C. difficile* infection and the associated diarrhoea may return.
- *C. difficile* produces spores that can survive for several weeks in the environment on any surface.
- Spores can be spread by the hands and infect other people by entering the body through the mouth.
- People in the following groups are more at risk of developing *C. difficile* those:
 - over 65 years old;
 - taking, or who have recently taken, antibiotics or other medication altering the normal bacteria in the gut;
 - with a reduced resistance to infection generally;
 - who have spent a long time in a healthcare setting;
 - with a serious underlying illness; and
 - who have had bowel surgery.

It is always important for everyone to wash their hands frequently with soap and water.



- Your eating pattern does not need to change – just continue with a normal healthy diet.
- Maintain good hand hygiene, that is washing your hands with soap and water after going to the toilet, and before preparing and eating food.
- You can return to work if you have been free from diarrhoea for 48 hours.
- If you need antibiotics for any other illness, ensure that your GP knows that you have had a *C. difficile* infection.
- You should be aware that some people sometimes suffer a relapse; this is when the diarrhoea returns.
- A very small number of people suffer multiple relapses; further treatments can be discussed with your doctor.

Important things to remember should the diarrhoea recur at home

- Contact your GP immediately and ensure that they are aware that you have previously been diagnosed as having a *C. difficile* infection.
- Do not take any medicines to stop the diarrhoea (anti diarrhoeals) while you are suffering from *C. difficile*.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water.
- Use liquid pump dispenser soap, as a bar of soap can harbour germs.
- To clean surfaces that may have been contaminated with spores, wear disposable gloves, use household bleach and a disposable cloth, e.g. paper towels. Clean surfaces, particularly the toilet bowl, toilet seat and toilet flush handle, sink and taps.



- Follow the instructions on the label, as bleach can damage some surfaces and should be used with care. Household bleach spray surface cleaners are convenient and easy to use. Other bleaches need to be diluted in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Visible dirt can inactivate bleach. Where there is heavy soiling, wipe up any visible matter first then dispose of the cloth. Take another disposable cloth and use bleach to clean the area, repeat this again, disposing of the cloth each time.
- Soiled items should be kept separate from the rest of the household's washing and washed at 60°C. Take care not to overload the machine so that the water can circulate freely, as this will help to rinse away the germs.
- Remember to wash your hands after handling soiled items.
- If you use incontinence pads, contact your local authority waste disposal department for advice. They should not be put out for domestic rubbish collection.
- Make sure that all those caring for you read this leaflet.

A note on cross-contamination

To protect yourself and others from getting infected it is important to bear in mind that bacteria or germs can be left on one surface and then moved to another. The most common way of transferring bacteria is on the hands. This is why it is so important to wash your hands as often as possible to break the chain of infection.

Hand washing techniques

Wet both hands before application of soap (liquid is preferable). Follow the technique below for 15 – 30 seconds ensuring that each step consists of at least three strokes backwards and forwards.

Step 1

Rub palm to palm



Step 2

Right palm over back of left hand and left palm over back of right hand



Step 3

Palm to palm, with bent and spread out fingers



Step 4

Backs of fingers to opposing palms with fingers interlocked



Step 5

Circular rubbing of left thumb in closed right hand and vice versa



Step 6

Circular rubbing, backwards and forwards with closed right hand fingertips in left palm and vice versa.



Finally, rinse and dry hands thoroughly

This leaflet has been produced collaboratively between the Department of Health and C-diff Support. For more information, visit the Department of Health; Clean, Safe Care; or C-diff Support websites.

www.dh.gov.uk/

www.clean-safe-care.nhs.uk/

www.cdifff-support.co.uk/