



# C. diff

## Information for patients who have been prescribed antibiotics



This document was written by **Public Health Wales**. It is an easy read version of ‘**Clostridioides difficile (C. diff) – information for patients who have been prescribed antibiotics.**’

# How to use this document



This is an easy read version. The words and their meaning are easy to read and understand. But you may need support to read and understand this document.



For more information go to: [phw.nhs.wales](http://phw.nhs.wales)



Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh



[Easy Read Wales](#) made this document into Easy Read using **Photosymbols**. [To tell us what you think about this easy read version, click here.](#)

[Photosymbols Licence number 403527247.](#)

# Introduction



You have been given this leaflet because you have been prescribed antibiotics to treat an infection.



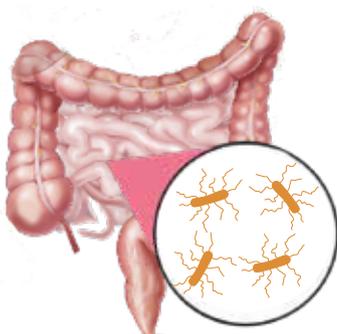
Your infection could make you feel very unwell, and antibiotics are the best treatment.



Taking antibiotics can cause side effects. One of the most common side effects is **diarrhoea** (runny poo) which is called **antibiotic-associated diarrhoea (AAD)**.



**Antibiotic-associated diarrhoea (AAD)** is generally mild and needs no further treatment.



Sometimes, people can get a more serious type of diarrhoea (runny poo), caused by the germ **C. difficile**. This is commonly known as **C. diff**.



This leaflet will tell you about **C. diff** infection, which is linked with the use of antibiotics.

The most common signs of **C. diff** are:



- watery diarrhoea, which can be bloody



- painful tummy cramps



- feeling sick



- signs of **dehydration**, like a dry mouth, headaches and peeing less often than normal



- a high temperature (fever) of above 38C (100.4F)



- loss of appetite (not feeling like eating) and weight loss.



**C. diff** can make people very unwell.



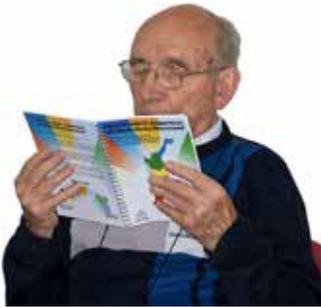
If you have taken antibiotics, you may get **C. diff** days, weeks or even months after taking them.



**Please get medical attention straight away if you have signs of a C. diff infection, so you can be tested and treated as quickly as possible.**



If you have had **C. diff** before, you must tell your healthcare professional. This could affect your treatment.



Antibiotics can also cause other side effects, as well as **C. diff**. Please read the information leaflet provided with your antibiotics.



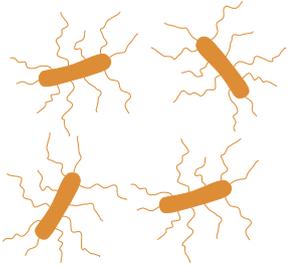
**It is very important to contact a healthcare professional if you develop any side effects from your antibiotics.**



**Please keep taking your antibiotics unless told to stop by a healthcare professional. Stopping prescribed antibiotics without medical advice could make your infection worse.**

# More information

## What is C. diff?



**C. diff** is short for **Clostridioides difficile**. It is often called **C. diff** or **C. difficile**. It is a type of bug or germ.



**C. diff** is found in the gut in a small number of healthy people.



**C. diff** is usually harmless, but it can grow and cause an infection when you are having certain medicines, like antibiotics or chemotherapy.

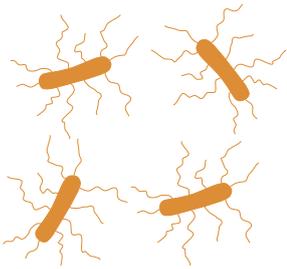


Antibiotics are useful as they kill germs, but they can cause **C. diff** infections. Using antibiotics is the most common cause of a **C. diff** infection.

# How do people get a C. diff infection?



**C. diff** germs are usually swallowed accidentally after touching surfaces that have **C. diff** on them.



**C. diff** can be found in many places, both outside and inside our homes and hospitals, and can survive on different surfaces for a long time.



Usually, swallowing **C. diff** doesn't make you sick, but sometimes it can.



Washing your hands with soap and water is the most important thing you can do to help reduce the spread of infections. It will help protect you, your family, and others.



Always wash your hands with soap and water before eating / preparing food, after using the toilet, when your hands become dirty and when entering or leaving a hospital.

## You are more likely to get a C. diff infection if you:



- are taking, or have recently taken antibiotics



- are in hospital, or a care home, especially if you have been there a long time



- are over 65 years old



- are having treatment for cancer



- are taking medicines to lower the acid in your stomach



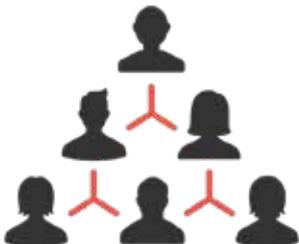
- have a gut condition



- have had stomach or gut surgery

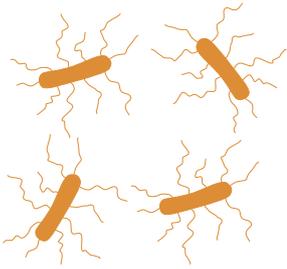


- have an illness, or are taking medicines, that weaken your immune (defence) system. This is the system in your body that fights infections.



You can also get a **C. diff** infection without any of these risk factors.

## How does C. diff spread?



When someone has **C. diff**, **C. diff** germs can be found in their poo. If their poo is runny (diarrhoea), it is more likely to spread to other people.



Germs can survive on skin (like your hands), fabrics (clothes and bedding), toilets, bed frames and other surfaces, then spread and infect other people.



Without thorough cleaning, the germs can survive for a very long time, and infect other people.



If you have runny poo (diarrhoea), you and the people around you must always wash your hands with soap and water and dry them thoroughly.



Alcohol gel **does not work** against **C. diff**.



**If you have questions, or are worried about C. diff, speak to your healthcare professional.**