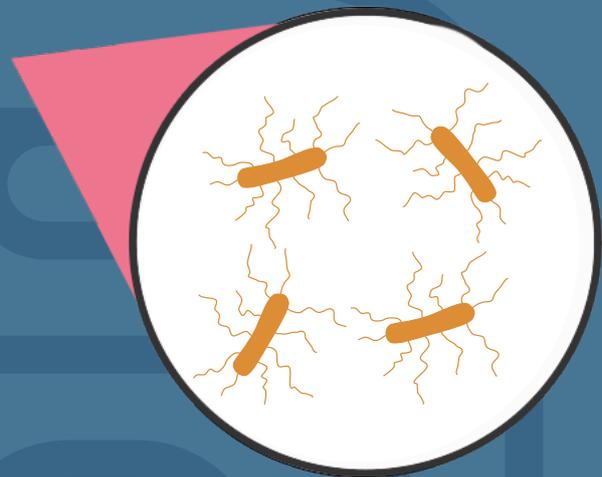


C. diff

Information for patients and carers about C. diff infections



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

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.



Words in **bold blue writing** may be hard to understand. You can check what all the words in blue mean under the word in a box.



For more information go to: phw.nhs.wales



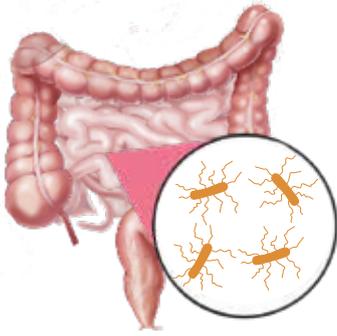
Mae'r daflen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This leaflet is also available in Welsh



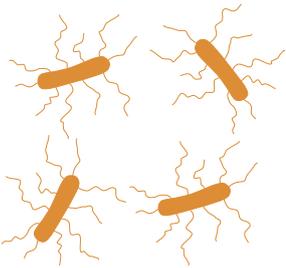
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About C. diff



You have been given this information leaflet because you, or someone you care for has tested positive for **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.

What are the signs of a C. diff infection?

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



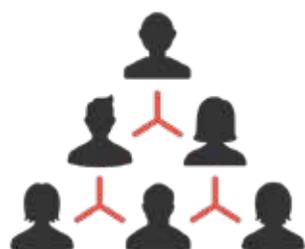
- a high temperature (fever) of above 38C (100.4F)



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



The infection can sometimes cause more serious health problems. Some people might have to go to hospital.



Some people can get **C. diff** germs and not get sick, but they can still spread them to others.

Who is at risk of C. diff infection?

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



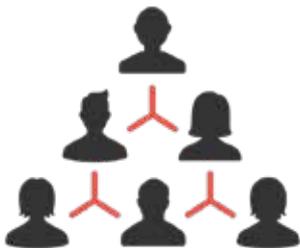
- have a gut condition



- 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.

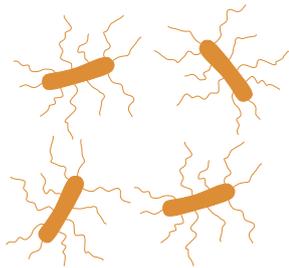


You can also get a **C. diff** infection without any of these risk factors.

How 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.

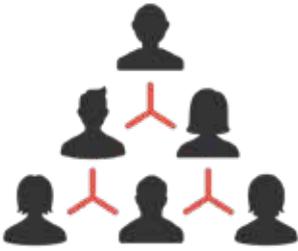


Washing your hands with soap and water is the most important thing you can do to help reduce the spread of infections. It will help protect you, your family, and others.



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.

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**.

What is the treatment for C. diff infection?



Antibiotics that can kill **C. diff** germs are usually used to treat **C. diff** infections.



You must finish the antibiotics, even if you feel better, to make sure you have the best chance of getting completely better.



Make sure you drink plenty of water.



Your healthcare professional may ask you to stop taking other medicines until the **C. diff** infection has been treated.

How will my care change in hospital?

If you are in hospital, to avoid the spread of **C. diff** to others:



- You may be looked after in a separate room in the hospital.



- You may have a separate toilet.



- You must make sure you always wash your hands with soap and water and dry your hands properly after using the toilet and before eating.



- Healthcare staff should wear plastic aprons and gloves when taking care of you and should remove these, and wash their hands with soap and water, when they have finished.



- Staff and visitors should wash their hands with soap and water before and after visiting you.



- Your family should talk to the person in charge of your ward about rules for visiting you.

What should I do when I go home from hospital, or if I am at home when I get a C. diff infection?



- Everyone in your home should wash their hands often, using soap and water. Always wash your hands after going to the toilet and before preparing and eating food.



- Wash clothes, towels, and sheets at the highest possible temperature.



- During your treatment (and later if the diarrhoea continues or returns), clean and disinfect the toilet bowl, flush handle and taps after using the toilet. Use a bleach-based solution to do this but take care as some cleaning products can be harmful.



- If surfaces have poo on them, first remove the poo and make the surface visibly clean, and then disinfect again.



- Do not share personal items such as towels, facecloths, and toothbrushes with others.

Can you get C. diff infection more than once?



3 out of 10 people who have had a **C. diff** infection get it more than once.



If signs of a **C. diff** infection come back, please talk to your healthcare professional straight away for advice and to get the right treatment.



Taking antibiotics could put you at risk of another **C. diff** infection.



To reduce your chance of getting **C. diff** again, it is important that your healthcare professional knows that you have had a previous **C. diff** infection.



You may be offered a **C. diff** patient information card. If you do not already have a **C. diff** card, please ask a healthcare professional for one.



Make sure that you show your **C. diff** card to all healthcare professionals before you get any further treatments.



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