



# QUESTIONS QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ANSWERS

## What is Clostridium Difficile (C-Diff)?

---

There are good and bad bacteria in the body. The good bacteria that live in the gut help digest food. They also help control the number of bad bacteria. The bad bacteria can cause illness if there are too many of them. Clostridium Difficile, or C-Diff for short, is bad bacteria found in the gut.

When people are ill, they often take antibiotics to kill bad bacteria. The problem is that antibiotics can kill good bacteria too. C-Diff is tough bacteria, not always killed by antibiotics. When the good bacteria that keep C-Diff in check are killed off, C-Diff can take over the gut, causing loose and watery stool called diarrhea. Diarrhea can happen right away or weeks after a person stopped taking antibiotics. C-Diff can also cause diarrhea when a person takes certain cancer drugs.

### How Does C-Diff Spread?

C-Diff spreads from hand to mouth. Always wash your hands, especially:

- Before you eat
- After using the toilet
- After handling clothes, towels or bed clothes soiled by diarrhea

### How can I stop the spread of C-Diff?

Proper hand-washing is important to stop the spread of C-Diff. Proper hand-washing steps include:

- Using warm, running water
- Using plenty of soap
- Scrubbing the hands all over
- Keeping hands down toward the drain while washing
- Cleaning under and around the finger nails
- Rinsing well with warm, running water

- Drying well with a paper towel
- Using a clean paper towel to turn off the water

### What are the tests used to detect C-Diff?

The doctor may:

- Send a small sample of the diarrhea stool to a lab for testing
- Order a blood test to check for C-Diff

### What are the treatments for C-Diff?

- The doctor may give you an antibiotic or change your existing antibiotic. This often makes the problem go away.
- The doctor may give you medicine to ease the discomfort of C-Diff.
- Eating yogurt once or twice a day to help replace the good bacteria in the gut.

### How can I prevent C-Diff at home?

**Wear rubber gloves** that can be thrown away if you must touch clothes, towels or bed clothes soiled by diarrhea. You can buy these gloves at the drug store. Wash your hands after taking off the gloves.

**Laundry:** People with diarrhea should not share wash cloths or towels with others. These items should be washed between uses. Wash soiled clothes, towels and bed clothes by themselves. Use laundry soap and bleach.

**Tip:** Mix  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup of chlorine bleach with 1 gallon of water to make a germ-killing cleaner. Use this cleaner on floors, toilets, sinks, sponges and mops. Throw away the cleaner after each use.

**Food and Dishes:** People with C-Diff do not need separate dishes or silverware. Wash dishes with hot, soapy water or put them in the dish washer. They do not need to be separated. When preparing food, wash your hands, do not lick your fingers and do not taste food from the cooking spoon or utensil.

**How can I find a Doctor?**

St. Vincent Charity Hospital has doctors who have special training in the treatment of infections. To contact one of our doctors, please call:

**Physician Referral Line at 1.800.223.8662**

Visit our website at [www.stvincentcharity.com](http://www.stvincentcharity.com)

**St. Vincent Charity Hospital**

2351 East 22<sup>nd</sup> Street

Cleveland, Ohio 44115

216.861.6200

TTY: Ohio Relay 1.800.750.0750

**HealthCare Center at Saint Luke's Pointe**

11201 Shaker Boulevard

Cleveland, Ohio 44104

216.721.6900

Reading Health, a program of Project: LEARN, assisted in the writing of this material under a grant from the Sisters of Charity Foundation: January 2008



**ST. VINCENT CHARITY  
MEDICAL CENTER**

*A Ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System*

