

Please present this card when attending a healthcare facility

## *Clostridium difficile*

**NHS**  
Northumbria Healthcare  
NHS Foundation Trust

Support

### Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on **0344 811 8118**

### Other sources of information

#### NHS 111

#### NHS Choices

[www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx)

#### NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

[www.nice.org.uk](http://www.nice.org.uk)

#### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: **0800 032 0202**

Text: 01670 511098

Email: [northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk](mailto:northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk)

#### Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries **0344 811 8111**

[www.northumbria.nhs.uk](http://www.northumbria.nhs.uk)

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*C.difficile* infection is highly infectious and the infection prevention and control team are keen to ensure healthcare professionals who have contact with this patient are aware of the steps they can take to minimise further risk.

We would ask you to consider this diagnosis when making future decisions about the patient's management.

If treatment is required, this should be for a minimum duration of 10 days to reduce the risk of relapse.

If an admission to hospital is required or contact with other healthcare services we would ask that **YOU** communicate the patient's *C.difficile* status, to enable prompt instigation of infection control practices.

Please refer to the antibiotic section for further information and do not hesitate to contact a member of the infection control team or a microbiologist.

Patients who have had or are colonised with *C.difficile* are at risk of relapse/recurrence.

Antibiotics disturb the balance in the gut, allowing *C.difficile* to multiply rapidly and produce toxins which cause illness. Therefore, antibiotics should only be prescribed if absolutely necessary.

Any antibiotic can cause/induce *C.difficile* infection, however the antibiotics associated with the highest risk are the 4 C's:

- . Cephalosporins
- . Clindamycin
- . Ciprofloxacin (and other Quinolones)
- . Co-amoxiclav

If in doubt, please discuss with a Microbiologist.

Antibiotic Prescribing  
Information For Healthcare  
Professionals

Information for Healthcare  
Professionals

Who should I contact?

If you require any further information or need to speak to someone you can contact either the hospital or community infection control teams via Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust main switchboard on 0344 811 8111.

GDH enzyme has been identified in this patient's bowel on \_\_\_\_\_

*C.difficile* toxin has been identified in this patient's bowel on \_\_\_\_\_

*C.difficile* is short for *Clostridium difficile*. This is a bacterium that lives in the large bowel.

A small number of adults have *C.difficile* in their large bowel but it doesn't make them ill because it is probably controlled by other types of bacteria along with other factors.

Diagnosis of *C.difficile* infection usually relies on both clinical symptoms and signs; and by testing stool specimens in the laboratory. Occasionally, it may be diagnosed by x-ray or looking directly at the bowel e.g. colonoscopy.

## What do my results mean?

Testing for *C.difficile* on stool specimens incorporates an initial screen to detect the presence of GDH (Glutamate Dehydrogenase) enzyme. A further test is then carried out to determine the presence of *C.difficile* toxins within the stool.

If GDH alone is detected in your stool, you may not have an active *C.difficile* infection. This is likely to mean that you are carrying *C.difficile* in your large bowel. As a carrier you may be at an increased risk of developing a *C.difficile* infection and could pass your *C.difficile* onto other people who could also become ill.

If both GDH and *C.difficile* toxin is detected in your stool and your clinical signs and symptoms are consistent with infection; this may indicate you have *C.difficile* infection and will be treated accordingly.

When some people are given antibiotics the normal bacteria can be disrupted, giving bacteria such as *Clostridium difficile* the opportunity to multiply and cause diarrhoea. Your symptoms will vary depending on how seriously you are affected. The main symptoms can be:

- . Diarrhoea
- . Alteration in your bowel frequency
- . Abdominal pain
- . Fever
- . Feeling nauseous or vomiting

Rarely *C.difficile* can cause the large bowel to become inflamed and enlarged

## What are the symptoms?

## How is it treated?

If you have an active *C.difficile* infection your doctor will prescribe medication for you.

You may need treatment to replace the fluid you have lost - drink plenty. If you can't drink you may need to have a fluid drip.

Patients whose stool only tests positive for GDH do not always require treatment if they have no ongoing symptoms of diarrhoea.

## What can I do?

It is important that you take steps to avoid spreading *C.difficile*. You can do this by washing your hands with soap and water after going to the toilet; and before preparing or eating food.

*C.difficile* spores are very hardy and can survive on clothes and surfaces for long periods; so regularly clean kitchens, bathrooms and toilets with disinfectant. Wash towels and bed linen regularly at the highest temperature the fabric can withstand.

You also need to be aware that about one in five people who have had treatment can re-develop symptoms. If this happens and persists, contact your doctor as you may require further treatment.