

# PATIENTS AND FAMILIES: *BE ANTIBIOTICS AWARE*

## *C. DIFF* INFECTION — AM I AT RISK?

Talk with your healthcare professional about your risk for developing *C. diff* infection before starting an antibiotic.

### What is *C. diff* infection?

*C. diff* is a germ (bacterium) that causes severe diarrhea and colitis (an inflammation of the colon). *C. diff* infection can be life-threatening.

### Who is at risk for *C. diff* infection?



*C. diff* can affect anyone. You are 7 to 10 times more likely to get *C. diff* infection while taking antibiotics and during the month after. That's because antibiotics that fight bacterial infections by killing bad germs can also get rid of the good germs that protect the body against harmful infections, like *C. diff* infections.

### Other risk factors include:



Previous infection with *C. diff* or known exposure to the germs



Older age



Recent stay at a hospital or nursing home



A weakened immune system (examples: people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or who take immune suppressing drugs)

### Symptoms of *C. diff* infection can include:



Severe diarrhea



Fever



Stomach tenderness or pain



Loss of appetite



Nausea

*Clostridioides difficile* (*C. diff*) is estimated to cause almost half a million infections in the United States each year.



[www.cdc.gov/cdiff](http://www.cdc.gov/cdiff)  
[www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use](http://www.cdc.gov/antibiotic-use)

# THE PROGRESSION OF A *C. DIFF* INFECTION



*C. diff* is a bacterium (germ) that causes severe diarrhea and colitis (an inflammation of the colon). *C. diff* infections can be life-threatening.

***C. diff* can infect anyone. Most cases of *C. diff* infection occur while you're taking antibiotics or not long after you've finished taking antibiotics. Other risk factors include:**

- Previous infection with *C. diff* or known exposure to the germs
- Being 65 or older
- Recent stay at a hospital or nursing home
- A weakened immune system, such as people with HIV/AIDS, cancer, or organ transplant patients taking immunosuppressive drugs

**If you have signs or symptoms, see a doctor.**

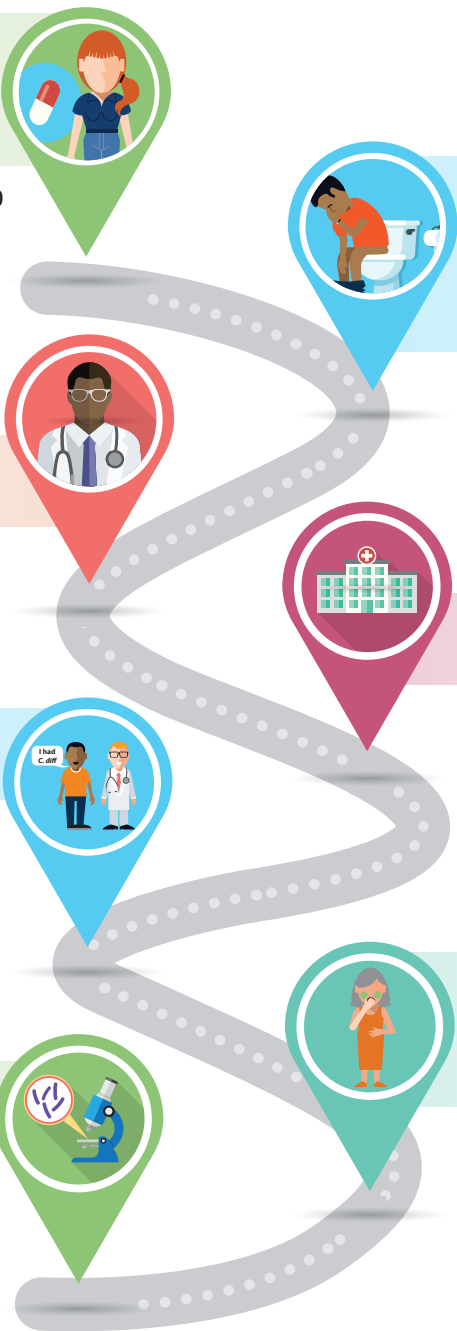
- The doctor will review your signs and symptoms and order a lab test.
- If it's positive, you'll take an antibiotic for 10 days.

**After you've recovered, you could still be colonized.**

- The germs will be in your body, but you won't feel sick. So you won't need treatment.
- But you can still spread it to others, so always practice good hand hygiene.
- Tell all of your healthcare providers that you've had *C. diff*.

**Some people get *C. diff* over and over again.**

- For those with repeat infections, fecal microbiota transplants have shown promising results.



***C. diff* develops within a few days or up to several weeks after you take antibiotics and symptoms can include:**

- Severe Diarrhea
- Fever
- Stomach tenderness or pain
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea

**You might be admitted to the hospital.**

- Your healthcare providers will use precautions such as wearing gloves and gowns to prevent the spread of *C. diff*.

**About 1 in 6 people who get *C. diff* infection will get it again in the subsequent 2-8 weeks.**

- If you have symptoms again, see your doctor.



***C. diff* is contagious, but you can keep others from getting it.**

- Wash your hands with soap and water every time you use the bathroom and always before you eat.
- Try to use a separate bathroom if you have diarrhea.
- Take showers and use soap.

[cdc.gov/cdiff](https://www.cdc.gov/cdiff)

CS321052-A



U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention