

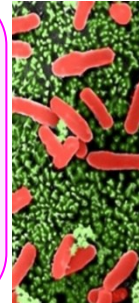
# Clostridioides difficile (*C. difficile*)



## What is *C. difficile*?

*C. difficile* is a spore forming bacteria that lives harmlessly in the bowel of up to 3-5% of healthy adults and 66% of babies.

Antibiotics disturb the balance of good bacteria in the gut allowing *C. difficile* bacteria to multiply rapidly causing diarrhoea.



## How is *C. difficile* spread?

*C. difficile* spores are passed in diarrhoea and can survive for long periods in the environment if cleaning is inadequate.

Hands can become contaminated from direct contact with an infected person or from contact with contaminated surfaces or equipment.

It gets into the next person via hand-to-mouth action, such as when eating from unwashed hands or eating food that has been touched by contaminated hands.

## *C. difficile* colonisation

Bacteria are present in the bowel, but not producing toxins that cause diarrhoea.

This may be a long-term condition and isolation is not required in a care home (unless symptomatic with diarrhoea).

Symptoms, if present, are usually very mild and antibiotic treatment is not normally required.

## *C. difficile* infection

Bacteria are present and producing toxins causing symptoms that can range from mild to severe diarrhoea.

Isolation is required until 48 hours symptom free and a formed stool, Bristol Stool Form Scale type 1-4, has been passed.

Antibiotics are required to treat *C. difficile* infection.

A clearance stool sample is not required following treatment.

## Stop the spread of *C. difficile*

Maintain a high standard of cleaning.

Always use liquid soap and warm running water for washing hands as alcohol handrub is not effective against *C. difficile* spores.

Further information can be found at [www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/clostridioides-difficile-policy-for-care-home-settings/](http://www.infectionpreventioncontrol.co.uk/resources/clostridioides-difficile-policy-for-care-home-settings/)