**Clostridium difficile**

Fact Sheet

What is *Clostridium difficile* infection?
*Clostridium difficile* infection (sometimes called *C. diff*) is caused by *Clostridium difficile* bacteria. Most cases of *C. diff* infection occur in people taking antibiotics.

How is it spread?
*C. diff* produces spores which can live outside the body in the air or on objects for a long time. *C. diff* has been found in patient settings on objects such as bed linens, bed rails, bathroom fixtures, and medical equipment. *C. diff* infection can spread from person-to-person via contaminated equipment and a person's hands.

What are the symptoms of *C. diff* infection?
Infection with *C. diff* can cause:
- watery diarrhea
- stomach cramping
- weakness
- dehydration
- fever
- nausea/vomiting.

Who is at risk of getting infected?
People taking antibiotics, especially more than one, or for a long time, are at greatest risk. Elderly persons, hospital patients, those who live in a nursing home, and those with underlying medical conditions are also at high risk. A person can get *C. diff* more than once.

How is it diagnosed?
*C. diff* is diagnosed with a lab test of the stool.

How is it treated?
Antibiotics are used to treat *C. diff* infection. In rare cases when *C. diff* does not respond to antibiotics, fecal biotherapy may be done. This is when “healthy” stool is transplanted inside a *C. diff* patient.

How can *C. diff* infection be prevented?
- Ask healthcare providers to wash their hands with soap and warm water before and after they care for you. Alcohol sanitizer does not destroy *C. diff* spores.
- Patients with *C. diff* will be on contact precautions. This means the patient is placed in a single room or with another patient at low risk. Providers and visitors wear gloves, gowns, mask, and wash their hands.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces with a 1:10 chlorine bleach product.
- Only take antibiotics when necessary.

Where can I get more information?
Contact your healthcare provider or local health center for more information. You can also contact the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention by calling 1-800-821-5821 or at [www.mainepublichealth.gov](http://www.mainepublichealth.gov). The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website - [http://www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) – is another excellent source of health information.