

## **CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE PATIENT INFORMATION**

### **WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE (C DIFF)?**

Clostridium difficile is one of the many germs (bacteria) that can be found in stool (a bowel movement).

### **WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE DISEASE?**

Clostridium difficile disease occurs when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the Clostridium difficile grow. When Clostridium difficile grows, it produces substances (toxins). These toxins can damage the bowel and may cause diarrhea. Clostridium difficile disease is usually mild but sometimes can be severe. In severe cases, surgery may be needed and in extreme cases Clostridium difficile may cause death. Clostridium difficile is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospital.

The main symptoms of Clostridium difficile disease are:

- Watery diarrhea
- Fever
- Abdominal pain or tenderness

### **WHO GETS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?**

Clostridium difficile disease usually occurs during or after the use of antibiotics. Old age, presence of other serious illnesses and poor overall health may increase the risk of severe disease.

### **HOW WILL YOUR DOCTOR KNOW THAT YOU HAVE CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?**

If you have symptoms of Clostridium difficile, your doctor will ask for a sample of your watery stool. The laboratory will test the stool to see if Clostridium difficile toxins are present.

### **HOW IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE TREATED?**

Treatment depends on how sick you are with the disease. People with mild symptoms may not need treatment. For more severe disease, an antibiotic is given.

### **HOW DOES CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE SPREAD?**

When a person has Clostridium difficile disease the germs in the stool can soil surfaces such as toilets, handles, bedpans, or commode chairs. When touching these items our hands can become soiled. If we then touch our mouth we can swallow the germ. Our soiled hands also can spread the germ to other surfaces.

## HOW TO PREVENT SPREAD IN THE HOSPITAL?

If you have Clostridium difficile diarrhea you will be moved to a private room until you are free from diarrhea for at least 2 days. Your activities outside the room will be restricted. Everyone who enters your room wears gown and gloves. Everyone **MUST** clean their hands when leaving your room.

Always wash your hands after using the bathroom. Cleaning hands is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of this germ. Because Clostridium difficile can live on objects in your room, it will be cleaned twice daily.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO AT HOME?

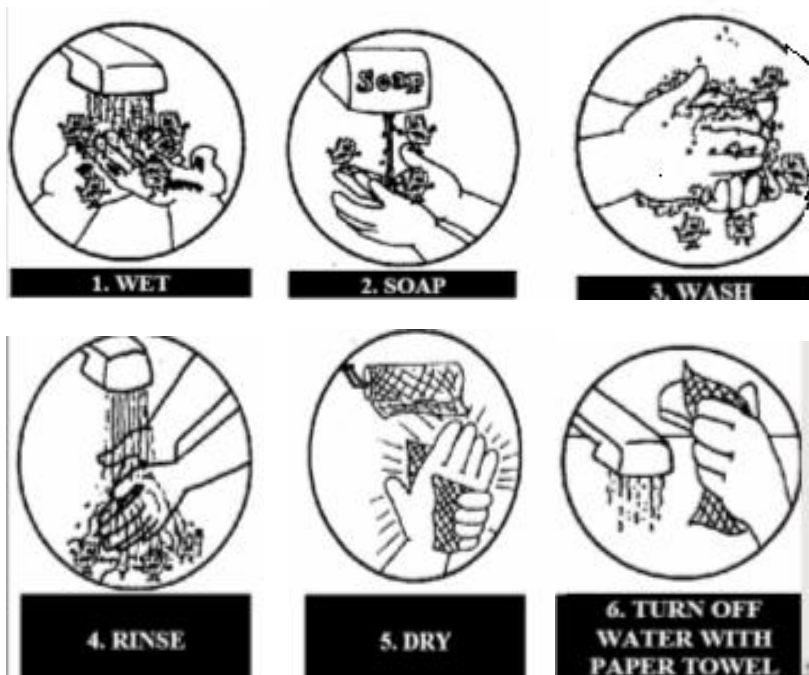
Healthy people like our family and friends who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk of getting Clostridium difficile disease.

### Hand care

Wash your hands for 15 seconds:

- After using the toilet or touching dirty surfaces
- Before eating or preparing meals.

### How to Wash Your Hands



## **Cleaning the house**

Use either a household cleaner, diluted according to the instructions or dilute household bleach:

- Wet the surface well and clean using good friction
- Allow the surface to air dry
- Pay special attention to areas that may be soiled with stool such as the toilet and sink. If you see stool remove first and then clean as described above.

## **Cleaning clothes/other fabric**

Wash clothes/fabric separately if they are heavily soiled with stool:

- Rinse stool off,
- Clean in a hot water cycle with soap
- Dry items in the dryer if possible.

## **Cleaning dishes:**

Regular cleaning, you can use the dishwasher or clean by hand with soap and water.

It is very important that you take all your medication as prescribed by your doctor. You should not use any drugs from the drugstore that will stop your diarrhea (e.g., Imodium<sup>®</sup>). If diarrhea persists or comes back, contact your doctor.