Canada's Hand Hygiene Challenge

What is Clostridium difficile?

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- A bacteria that causes diarrhea and other more serious conditions of the intestine like colitis (inflammation of the colon)
- This is one of the most common causes of diarrhea found in hospitals and nursing homes

How do people get C. difficile?

- People can get infected when their hands touch surfaces contaminated by feces and then touch their mouths
- Healthcare workers can spread C. difficile to patients if their hands are contaminated.

What are the symptoms?

- There is a wide range of symptoms, including watery diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain or tenderness.
- Rarely C. difficile can cause severe illness including shock, swelling of the colon requiring surgical removal, and death.

How can this be prevented?

- Wash your hands often, especially if you visit a hospital or a nursing home
- If you're visiting a person who has C. difficile or you have C. difficile, make sure you and everyone follow the isolation precautions very carefully. If you're not sure what to do, ask your healthcare provider.
- When prescribed antibiotics, follow your doctor's instructions carefully and the directions on the label

What puts a person at risk for developing C. difficile?

- If you're elderly
- If you're being treated with antibiotics
- If you are receiving chemotherapy
- If you're exposed to someone who has C. difficile and are not careful about washing your hands

Michael Gardam MSc, MD, CM, MSc, FRCPC.
Director, Infectious Diseases Prevention and Control, Ontario Agency for Health Protection & Promotion.