



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

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Public Health Agency of Canada: <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/id-mi/cdiff-eng.php>

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