

C. diff is a leading cause of healthcare-related infections worldwide.

Find out if you're at risk.

Learning more about *C. diff*

C. difficile (*C. diff*) is a contagious bacteria (germ) that infects the colon (large intestine). It is the leading cause of healthcare-related infections worldwide. Symptoms of *C. diff* infection may be mild to severe and include watery diarrhea, abdominal pain and cramping, fever, nausea, and dehydration. There is currently no vaccine available to prevent *C. diff* infection.

C. diff and infectious diarrhea

People can get diarrhea from a variety of causes, both infectious and non-infectious. Infectious diarrhea is more likely to involve fever, vomiting, and bloody stools and typically develops more rapidly.

Infectious diarrhea is caused by viruses, parasites, or bacteria (such as *C. diff*). People with infectious diarrhea caused by *C. diff* are contagious and can spread the illness to others. When someone gets *C. diff* during or shortly after a stay in the hospital or other healthcare facility, it is considered healthcare-related infectious diarrhea.

C. diff risk factors

C. diff can affect anyone, but certain factors increase your risk:



Recent antibiotic use: Antibiotics are a leading cause of *C. diff* infection, accounting for nearly half of all cases. Harmless bacteria normally live in our intestines and limit the growth of bacteria like *C. diff*. Taking antibiotics can kill the “good” bacteria that help prevent *C. diff* infections.¹



Hospitalization or frequent visits to healthcare facilities: *C. diff* is common in hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare facilities and can spread through contact with infected patients, bathrooms, telephones, remote controls, and other surfaces.



Age: People over the age of 65 are 10 times more likely to get a *C. diff* infection compared to younger adults.¹



Being immunocompromised: Medical conditions or treatments that weaken your immune system – like cancer, HIV, organ transplant, or inflammatory bowel disease – can increase your risk of infection.



Previous infection: While most people recover after treatment, about 1 in 9 people will get another *C. diff* infection within 8 weeks.²

Scan the QR code to watch a short video about *C. diff*

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Link created
upon final
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Preventing *C. diff* infection

Limit antibiotic use: A key way to reduce the risk of *C. diff* infection is to take antibiotics exactly as prescribed and talk with your doctors to ensure antibiotics are necessary, especially if you are at increased risk for *C. diff* infection.

Practice good hygiene: *C. diff* can remain on infected surfaces for months and spreads easily through contact with hands, doorknobs, clothing, and food. Because it is possible to carry *C. diff* without any symptoms, someone might not know they are contagious.³ That is why it's so important to regularly disinfect surfaces with bleach and wash your hands with soap and warm water, especially before preparing food and after using the bathroom or visiting a healthcare facility.

Treating *C. diff* infection

Treatment for a *C. diff* infection includes antibiotics, which increases the risk of further infections. Although most people respond well to antibiotic treatment, approximately 15% to 35% suffer at least 1 recurrence.⁴ Repeat infections are hard to treat and can lead to other severe health complications and even death.

Pursuing a vaccine to prevent infectious diarrhea caused by *C. diff*

Pfizer is currently researching an investigational vaccine to prevent *C. diff* infection. Development of a vaccine that helps the body's immune system defend against *C. diff* could help protect those at greatest risk.

Learn more

Contact the study team to see if participating in a Pfizer vaccine clinical trial may be right for you:

Upstate Global Health Institute

315-464-9869
Or
Trials@upstate.edu



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References

1. MayoClinic.org. *C. difficile* infection. <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/c-difficile/symptoms-causes/syc-20351691>. Accessed February 9, 2024.
2. CDC.gov. After *C. diff*: Caring for Yourself and Others. <https://www.cdc.gov/c-diff/after/index.html>. Accessed August 27, 2025.
3. CDC.gov. Preventing *C. diff*. <https://www.cdc.gov/c-diff/prevention/index.html>. Accessed August 27, 2025.
4. Gerding DN, Muto CA, Owens RC Jr. Treatment of *Clostridium difficile* infection. Clin Infect Dis. 2008; 46 (Suppl 1): S32-42.