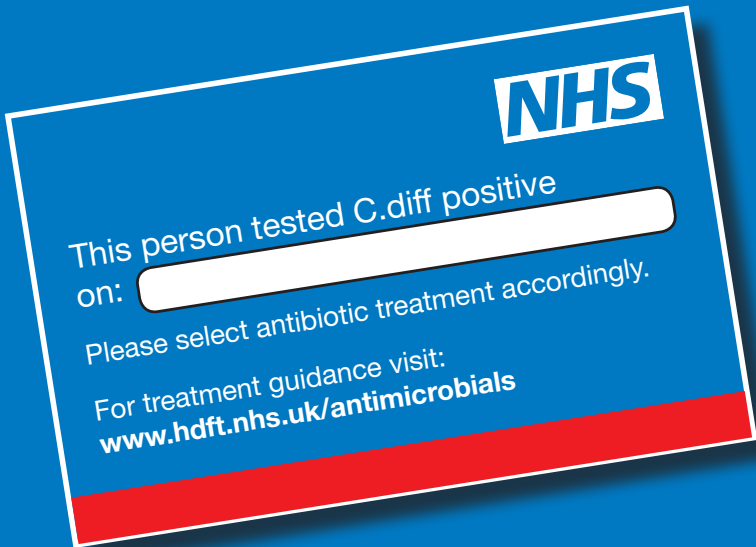


Your C.diff card



How to use it and
information for you

What is the C.diff card for and what should I do with it?

- You have been given the card below because you have a C.diff infection.
- This card is very important, it lets healthcare professionals know that you have a C.diff infection and you are also at risk of getting C.diff again in the future.
- It is very important that if you need antibiotic treatment, you receive the correct antibiotics and avoid those antibiotics which can make your symptoms return.
- If you need any antibiotics in the next few months your GP or the person prescribing them needs to make sure you are prescribed antibiotics which reduce the possible return of symptoms.
- You should show this card to any health professional involved in your care. This includes doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists or other healthcare workers.
- Even if you don't have symptoms at the moment, you may be at risk of getting C.diff again in the future.
- You should show this card to health professionals for at least one year from the date of your C.diff positive test.

Please peel off the card below and keep it with you.

What is C.diff?

- *Clostridium difficile* (also known as C.difficile or C.diff) is a bacteria (germ) which is found living harmlessly in the large bowel of about 3% of adults.
- Antibiotics may affect the normal balance of friendly bacteria in the bowel allowing C.diff to multiply in large numbers which causes diarrhoea.
- People most at risk of C.diff are usually those over the age of 65 years and who have had recent antibiotic treatment.



How do people get C.diff?

C.diff in the bowel rarely causes any problems. It's only when something disturbs the natural balance of the bacteria which live in the bowel that C.diff can make you ill. This usually happens when antibiotics are used to treat other illnesses. This is because antibiotics can kill off some of the healthy bacteria leaving room for C.diff to multiply which can lead to C.diff infection.

C.diff symptoms can include:

- Diarrhoea which can be mild or severe, which is often very offensive smelling.
- Blood in your faeces (poo).
- Stomach ache or cramps.
- Stomach is tender to touch.
- A fever.

How is C.diff spread?

- C.diff bacteria are present in large numbers in poo. A person with C.diff infection releases bacteria into the environment when they go to the toilet.

- C.diff can be spread by people who have the infection who do not wash their hands thoroughly.
- Surfaces can become contaminated by hands that have not been washed thoroughly.
- You can't see these bacteria, they can survive for weeks and can be picked up on hands allowing the spread of infection.

How do you know if you have C.diff infection?

All people over the age of 65 years who have diarrhoea will be tested for C.diff (a poo sample is sent to a hospital laboratory).

If the result is positive, you will be told you have a C.diff infection by your GP or hospital.

Can C.diff infection be treated?

- You will usually only need antibiotics if you have symptoms.
- If you do need antibiotics, it is vital that you complete the course that you are given to ensure that they work. **If you experience any difficulty with this please let your GP know as soon as possible.**
- If you are already taking antibiotics, your treatment will be reviewed and a different antibiotic may be prescribed.
- If diarrhoea returns, either during or after you have completed the course of antibiotics, it is important that you let your GP know as soon as possible. A further course of antibiotics may be required or the ones you are currently taking may need to be changed.
- Drink plenty of fluids to prevent dehydration. As a rough guide, drink at least a cup of water (200mls) after each episode of diarrhoea. This extra fluid is in addition to what you would normally drink.

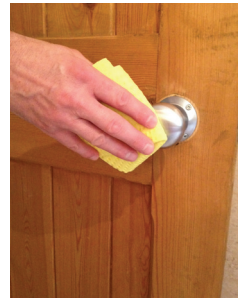


What are the key things you need to do?

The following should be undertaken until you are free from diarrhoea for 48 hours and your poo has returned to normal.

These measures will also help to prevent you becoming re-infected with C.diff.

- Always carry your C.diff card and show it to doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dentists, care home staff or other healthcare workers involved in your care.
- Make sure you wash your hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water, especially after going to the toilet and before preparing or eating food. Please see the 'Handwashing guide' in this leaflet.
- After you have an episode of diarrhoea, always close the toilet seat lid before flushing to reduce possible spread.
- Use a separate towel to dry your hands and this should be washed daily. Make sure this is not used by other members of the household or visitors.
- Do not use alcohol handrub as it does not kill C.diff germs.
- Clean surfaces in toilets/bathrooms, e.g. taps, toilet flush, door handles, soap dispenser, as often as possible (at least daily) using products containing bleach.
- Wash any soiled clothing and bedding as soon as possible. These should be washed separately from other people's at the highest temperature recommended by the manufacturer.
- If possible have a shower, bath or wash everyday, as C.diff bacteria can be on other areas of the body.



- Where possible, you should stay at home until you have been free from diarrhoea for 48 hours to prevent spreading it to other people.
- Do not take medicines to stop diarrhoea. These stop the C.diff bacteria being cleared from your body. Consult your GP.

What if I have a healthcare appointment?

If you are due to have an outpatient appointment, test or operation, ring the hospital or your GP and let them know you have C.diff. They will be able to give you advice on appointment arrangements.

Household visitors

- Visitors, including children, are **not** at risk if they are healthy.
- Visitors should wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water before leaving.
- All healthcare staff know how important handwashing is, but it is OK for you to ask if they have washed their hands.



What to do if your symptoms recur

- Sometimes people who have recently had a C.diff infection can become ill again.
- If your symptoms return, it is important to let your GP or the Out-of-Hours GP Service know as soon as possible.
- Use this card to let doctors, nurses, dentists, pharmacists or other healthcare workers know you have had a C.diff infection.

Handwashing guide

To reduce the spread of infection



1. Wet hands under warm running water, apply liquid soap, rub hands palm to palm with a circular action



2. Rub backs of both hands and between fingers



3. Rub hands palm to palm and between fingers



4. Rub both thumbs with a twisting action



5. Link hands and rub backs of fingers in palms



6. Rub both palms with finger tips, rinse hands under warm running water and dry thoroughly

General information about C. diff

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk

NHS Direct

0845 46 47

Community Infection Prevention and Control
Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust

www.hdft.nhs.uk/cdiff

For queries or concerns please ring:

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust on 01423 885959
(ask for the Community Infection Prevention and Control team)

If you would like this document in a different format, for example large print, audio cassette/CD, Braille or in another language, please contact 01423 859618.