

Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAIs): Clostridium Difficile (C. diff) Self-Management Plan

- Take medications only as prescribed by your health care provider.
- Use soap and water when washing your hands.
- Wear gloves when providing care to someone who has C. diff.

Green Flags—All Clear



If you:

- Do not take antibiotics regularly
- Do not have diarrhea
- Regularly wash your hands often with soap and water

What this means ...

- Good work!

Keep up the great work!

Yellow Flags—Caution



If you:

- Have three or more watery stools a day and symptoms lasting more than two days
- Have a new fever
- Have mild to moderate abdominal pain or cramping and abdominal tenderness
- Have blood in your stool

What this means ...

- You could have a HAI or C. diff.

Call your health care provider if symptoms do not improve.

Name:

Number:

Instructions:

If you notice a Yellow Flag, work closely with your health care team.

Red Flags—Stop and Think



If you:

- Have watery diarrhea 10–15 times a day
- Have severe abdominal cramping, pain, or a swollen abdomen
- Have a fever
- Have blood or pus in your stool
- Have nausea or loss of appetite

What this means ...

- You need to be evaluated by a health care professional immediately.

Call your health care provider's office.

Name:

Number:

Follow these instructions: **CALL 9-1-1**

If you notice a Red Flag, CALL 9-1-1. Emergency!

C. diff Fast Facts

- People getting medical care can get serious healthcare-associated infections (HAIs). One type of HAI is caused by the bacterium *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff).
- C. diff bacteria are found in the environment—in soil, air, water, human and animal feces, and in food products such as processed meats. People who are healthy may naturally carry the bacteria in their large intestine and not have ill effects from the bacteria. People with certain illnesses or conditions requiring antibiotics and the elderly are at greater risk of getting this germ.
- C. diff is an important cause of infectious disease death in the US. According to a 2015 study released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nearly half a million US residents suffered from C. diff infection in a single year. Approximately 29,000 patients died within 30 days of initial C. diff diagnosis.
- Symptoms of C. diff can be mild to severe. In a mild case, the most common symptoms include watery diarrhea and mild pain and/or tenderness in the abdominal area.
- In severe cases of C. diff infection, signs and symptoms can include:
 - Watery diarrhea 10–15 times a day.
 - Abdominal cramping and pain, which may be severe.
 - Fever.
 - Blood or pus in the stool.
 - Nausea.
 - Dehydration.
 - Loss of appetite.
 - Weight loss.
 - Swollen abdomen.
 - Kidney failure.
 - Increased white blood cell count.
- C. diff is passed when any surface or material (such as a toilet, bathing tub, or tubing) becomes contaminated with bacteria that is found in feces. People get the infection if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then touch their mouth or mucus membranes.

Clostridium difficile
is pronounced:

**Klo-STRID-ee-um
dif-uh-SEEL**

It is also known as
C. diff,
pronounced:

See-diff

What can you do?

- Take antibiotics only as prescribed by your health care provider and take all the medication, even if you start feeling better. Only stop taking medication, including antibiotics, if your health care provider tells you to do so.
- Avoid unnecessary use of antibiotics.
- Tell your health care provider if you have been on antibiotics and/or start to have diarrhea within a few months after taking the antibiotic.
- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before eating.
- Try to use a separate bathroom if you have diarrhea.
- Keep the bathroom cleaned well if you share the bathroom with someone who has diarrhea.

Aging and Disability Services

Aging and Disability Services (ADS)—the Area Agency on Aging for King County—plans, coordinates, and advocates for comprehensive services for older adults, family caregivers, and people with disabilities throughout Seattle and King County. For information about services or interpretation assistance, call 844-348-5464 or e-mail info@communitylivingconnections.org.



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