



What is it?

- *Clostridium difficile* (*C.difficile*) is a bacterium that causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis. When antibiotics destroy a person's good bowel bacteria, *C. difficile* bacteria can grow. When this occurs, the *C. difficile* bacteria produce toxins, which can damage the bowel and cause diarrhea. However, some people can have *C. difficile* bacteria present in their bowel and not show symptoms. For healthy people, *C. difficile* does not pose a health risk. The elderly and those with other illnesses or who are taking antibiotics are at a greater risk of infection.

What are the symptoms?

- watery diarrhea (at least three bowel movements per day for two or more days)
- fever
- loss of appetite
- nausea
- abdominal pain/tenderness

How is it spread?

- Because the bacteria are found in the feces, people can become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then touch their mouth or mucous membranes. Healthcare workers can spread the bacteria to other patients or contaminate surfaces through hand contact.

How is it treated?

- For people with mild symptoms, no treatment may be required. For more severe symptoms it is generally treated for 10 days with antibiotics prescribed by your healthcare provider.

Whom should I talk to if I have any questions?

Communicable Disease Control, Algoma Public Health at (705) 942-4646, www.algomapublichealth.com, or your health care provider.