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**FACT
SHEET**

CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE ASSOCIATED DIARRHEA (CDAD)

Information for Patients and Families

Infection Control:
It's in your hands!

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What is CDAD?

Clostridium difficile associated diarrhea (CDAD) is a common infection found in hospitals and often occurs following treatment with antibiotics. When antibiotics kill off the friendly bacteria that normally live in your bowel, the bacteria *C. difficile* takes advantage of the situation and multiplies more easily. The toxins from the *C. difficile* bacteria cause the bowel to become inflamed. This leads to watery diarrhea. Some other drugs besides antibiotics can also encourage the growth of these bacteria.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms include diarrhea, fever, and abdominal cramping. Blood in the stool occurs in some cases.

How did I get it?

CDAD is often a hospital acquired infection, although 5% of the population normally carry *C. difficile* bacteria in their bowel. Antibiotics and some other medications change the normal balance of bacteria in the bowel making it easier for the *C. difficile* bacteria to multiply and cause symptoms.

The bacteria can be picked up from commonly touched surfaces such as toilet flushes, taps and light switches. From the hands, the bacteria can be inadvertently swallowed. The bacteria can then grow in the bowel and cause an infection.

How is it treated?

When a patient has diarrhea and CDAD is suspected, a stool specimen is collected. The laboratory tests the stool for a toxin produced by the *C. difficile* bacteria. If positive, the physician will decide the best treatment. Sometimes antibiotics are stopped. This allows healthy bowel bacteria to grow back. Sometimes the physician will prescribe antibiotic therapy that specifically treats CDAD.

Can it be spread to others?

C. difficile can survive on surfaces. It can then be transmitted by hands that have come in contact with anything that is contaminated. Healthy people, who are not taking antibiotics, are at low risk of getting sick from this bacteria.

How do we stop it from spreading?

Hand washing is the most important practice especially after using the bathroom and before eating. Wash hands with soap and water using lots of friction for 20 to 30 seconds. Dry hands with paper towels and then use the paper towels to turn off the taps.

While you have symptoms you will be on isolation precautions. Staff will wear gloves and gowns for direct care. Staff must wash their hands after providing care. An isolation sign will be posted to remind staff and Housekeeping to take special precautions. A private washroom or dedicated commode will be provided. You will be asked to stay in your room and stay away from common patient areas such as the kitchenette.

What do we do at home?

All the family should practice frequent, careful hand washing. Use gloves to clean up areas soiled with stool.

Clean toilets, sinks and bathroom counter tops with a bleach solution (1 ounce (30 ml) in 3 litres of water) daily until the diarrhea has stopped for 3 days. Then resume your normal cleaning. Rinse and launder the cleaning cloth before reuse. Soiled clothing should be washed in a normal manner then put in the dryer.

What if the diarrhea recurs?

Seek immediate medical attention from your physician or return to the Hospital Emergency.