

What the hospital is doing

The prevention of infection is a priority for United Lincolnshire Hospitals NHS Trust. To prevent Clostridium difficile infections, we:

- train staff to wash their hands and equipment correctly
- ensure staff are “bare below the elbows” and wash their hands before and after each time they touch a patient or the patient’s environment
- screen patients for Clostridium difficile if they are admitted with or develop diarrhoea
- isolate patients who have been found to have Clostridium difficile in a side room and provide treatment if required
- monitor standards of hygiene in all wards and departments
- encourage visitors to wash their hands before and after visiting wards (hand hygiene stations (alcohol gel) are found outside every ward)

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your nurse for advice or ask to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention Team.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers confidential information, support and advice on health related matters. Contact can be made either by telephone, email or in person and PALS staff can visit patients on wards.

Lincoln County Hospital: (01522) 707071

Grantham and District Hospital: (01476) 464861

Pilgrim Hospital, Boston: (01205) 446243

The Trust endeavours to ensure that the information given here is accurate and impartial.



If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

Clostridium difficile

Infection Prevention Team

www.ulh.nhs.uk

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile is a bacteria that is normally found in the bowel in about 3% of healthy adults. It is, however, a main cause of antibiotic associated diarrhoea in susceptible people.

Clostridium difficile creates spores that are difficult to kill using general cleaning products and can live in the environment for a long time. It is therefore easy to pass between people.

Antibiotic Associated Diarrhoea

Clostridium difficile can cause diarrhoea if specific antibiotics disturb the balance of “good” bacteria in the bowel, allowing Clostridium difficile bacteria to multiply and produce toxins.

Most people are only mildly affected by these toxins, but symptoms can range from mild diarrhoea to severe inflammation of the gut (colitis). In a worst case, it can lead to perforation of the bowel and subsequent infection and complications.

How is Clostridium difficile passed on between people?

Older people and those already ill or with a low immunity are particularly affected. It is normally activated by the use of certain antibiotics.

A person with Clostridium difficile infection can excrete many spores in their diarrhoea, which can contaminate the environment including the room, bed, toilet or commodes. It can therefore be passed on directly from other affected people or through the environment.

How is Clostridium difficile treated?

For patients with mild illness, stopping any antibiotics and increasing fluid intake normally leads to rapid improvement.

For patients with more severe illness, specific antibiotics will be prescribed to kill Clostridium difficile.

How is Clostridium difficile managed in hospital?

If someone develops Clostridium difficile infection the following steps are put in place to reduce the risk of passing the infection on to other patients.

The patient will:

- be nursed in a single room where possible
- have their own toilet or commode

The staff will:

- treat linen from the room as infected
- clean the environment and medical equipment regularly with a disinfectant
- ensure they wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water
- wear disposable aprons and gloves when providing care in the room
- thoroughly clean the room following discharge of the patient

What you can do

You can help to avoid the transmission of Clostridium difficile by:

- washing your hands after using the toilet or commode and before you eat
- keeping your bed space tidy and uncluttered to make cleaning easier for ward staff
- letting the ward staff know if you see any dust or dirt on the ward
- asking staff and visitors to wash their hands before and after seeing you
- asking visitors not to sit on your bed or to use patients' toilets (chairs for visitors are available on every ward)
- not sharing items with other patients unless they have been cleaned
- letting the ward staff know if you have had Clostridium difficile infection in the past