

## *Clostridium difficile*

### **What is *Clostridium difficile*?**

*C. difficile* is a spore-forming bacteria that causes severe diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis.

### **What is the meaning of the term *C. difficile* diseases?**

They are diseases that result from *C. difficile* infections such as colitis, more serious intestinal conditions, sepsis, and rarely death.

### **What are the symptoms of *C. difficile* disease?**

Symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea (at least three times a day for two or more days)
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain/tenderness

### **How is *C. difficile* treated?**

*C. difficile* is generally treated for 10 days with antibiotics prescribed by a healthcare provider.

### **How do people get *C. difficile* disease?**

People in good health usually don't get *C. difficile* disease. People who have other illnesses or conditions requiring prolonged use of antibiotics and the elderly are at greater risk of acquiring this disease. The bacteria are found in feces. People can become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then touch their mouths or mucous membranes. Healthcare workers can spread

the bacteria to other patients or contaminate surfaces through hand contact.

### **What should I do to prevent the spread of *C. difficile* to others?**

If you are infected you can spread the disease to others. However, only people who are hospitalized or on antibiotics are likely to become ill. For health and safety reasons take the following precautions:

- Wash hands with soap and water, especially after using the restroom and before eating;
- Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household detergent/disinfectants.

### **What should I do if I think I have *C. difficile*?**

Contact your healthcare provider.

**For specific concerns about *Clostridium difficile*, call the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services, Bureau of Infectious Disease Control at 603-271-4496 or 800-852-3345 x4496. For further information, refer to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov) or the New Hampshire Department of Health and Human Services website at [www.dhhs.nh.gov](http://www.dhhs.nh.gov).**