

# ***Clostridium difficile* Infection (CDI)**

## **Information for Patients and Families**

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

*Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*) is a bacterium, a germ that normally lives in the stomach and intestines. The bacteria can produce toxins that cause diarrhea. Some people have *C. diff* in their body, but are not made sick from it. Some people who get over the infection can continue to have the germ in their intestines for weeks to years.

### **What are the symptoms of *C. diff* infection?**

- Watery and/or bloody diarrhea
- Abdominal pain/tenderness
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Dehydration

### **What increases people's chances of getting *C. diff*?**

- Taking antibiotics
- Having surgery
- Being in a health care facility for an extended period of time
- Having serious underlying illness
- Contact from unwashed hands or with objects contaminated with *C. diff*

### **Can my child's *C. diff* be spread?**

Any surface that becomes contaminated with stool or with *C. diff* from the stool can spread the disease. It can be spread from unwashed hands or from unclean items that are shared. When someone touches the dirty item and then touches his or her mouth *C. diff* infection can happen.

### **Is there treatment for *C. diff* infection?**

*C. diff* sometimes frequently clears up in two to three days after antibiotics are stopped. It can also be treated with special antibiotics. Hospitalized people with *C. diff* infection frequently need special antibiotics to get better.

### **What should I expect if my child is in the hospital with *C. diff*?**

At Dell Children's Medical Center, your child will be placed on **Contact Precautions** in his or her room until the diarrhea has gone away. Healthcare workers will wear isolation gowns and gloves when providing care to ensure germs are not spread to the environment and other patients.

*C. diff* is different from other germs because it forms "spores" that cannot be removed with an alcohol rub. Hands must be washed with soap and water. Healthcare workers will wash their hands before entering and when leaving your child's room.

### **What can I do as a partner in my child's care?**

As always, all family members should wash their hands well with soap and water after using the bathroom or handling diapers or clothing soiled with stool.

### **What is important to prevent the spread of *C. diff* after my child goes home?**

- Continue good hand washing with soap and water.
- Regular bathing and clean clothing for your child.
- If clothes or bed linens become soiled with diarrhea, wash them separately in the washing machine with hot water, detergent, and bleach if fabric compatible. Machine dry if possible.
- If your child is having diarrhea, clean and disinfect the bathroom surfaces with a diluted bleach solution (1/2 cup bleach in 1 quart of water).
- Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in the bathroom and other places in your home, such as faucet handles, bedrails, door knobs etc.