

Further information

Department of Health: www.dh.gov.uk

Health Protection Agency: www.hpa.org.uk



The Christie
NHS Foundation Trust

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Infection prevention and control

Information for patients with Clostridium difficile infection

What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (also known as C.diff, CDI), is a bacterium that can cause infections in the bowel. The symptoms include abdominal pain, diarrhoea, and sometimes fever. The bacteria are normally kept under control by other bacteria that live in the gut. However, some medications alter the conditions in the gut allowing C.diff to multiply. It then produces toxins that cause diarrhoea and, in rare cases, can lead to severe inflammation of the bowel.

How did I get C.diff?

The bacteria may have been in your bowel before you came into hospital without causing you any harm, or you may have acquired them since your admission.

C.diff produces spores that can live in the environment for a long time. A patient who has C.diff and who has diarrhoea can spread the germ into the environment that can then be transmitted to another person through touching contaminated surfaces.

If you have symptoms of diarrhoea, a sample will be taken and sent to the laboratory. The results will normally be available within 24 hours. It is important to let your doctor or nurse know if you start with diarrhoea whilst in hospital.



How is it treated?

Your doctor may prescribe specific antibiotics to treat this infection. It is important to replace the fluids you are losing due to the diarrhoea, either by drinking plenty of fluids or by having them intravenously (via a drip into the vein).

Where will I be cared for if I have C.diff?

You will be moved into a single room with en-suite facilities. You will stay in this side room for the rest of your stay at The Christie. This helps to prevent the spread of infection to other patients.

Staff will wear gloves and aprons when caring for you and will wash their hands carefully before leaving the room. Your environment will be kept as clean as possible. It is important to reduce the number of personal belongings you have in your room to make cleaning easier and more effective.

How will I know when the infection has gone?

C.diff infection usually responds well to treatment with antibiotics. Symptoms usually begin to fade once treatment has started. However, it may take several days to become completely symptom-free. It will still be important to wash your hands regularly particularly after using the toilet or commode and before eating, to reduce the risk of re-infection.

Will it affect my visitors, family and friends?

C.diff is not a risk to healthy people, and so we encourage you to have visitors.

Patients are most at risk from C.diff so visitors should wash their hands carefully before leaving your room and staff will advise them not to visit other patients on the ward or socialise with other visitors whilst at The Christie.

Can I still go home?

As soon as your general condition allows and your doctors are happy for you to go, you can go home.

It is important to remember that symptoms may start again after you have been discharged, particularly if you receive certain antibiotics in the future.

We will tell your GP about your C.diff infection, but it is worth reminding the GP if you visit the surgery after discharge from The Christie.

What can I do to help?

- Good personal hygiene is an important part of your treatment, so take a daily bath or shower.
- If you have diarrhoea, drink plenty of clear fluids to help prevent dehydration.
- You can usually leave your room to have tests in other departments as long as your symptoms are under control. Your nurse should inform these departments about the C.diff before you go.
- Similarly, if you are going to transfer to another hospital or going to another hospital for treatment, your doctor or nurse will inform them about your infection before you arrive.
- Please don't feel that these extra precautions are singling you out. They are intended to protect you and other patients. It is the infection which causes the problem, not you!
- It is important not to socialise with other patients. This helps to prevent the infection spreading. It also helps to protect you from picking up another infection.

Useful contact information

If you or any of your visitors are still unsure of the advice given above, please contact a member of the infection prevention and control team, or look online.

Wayne Gilbert, lead nurse, infection prevention and control
Joanne Chambers and Gary Thirkell, infection prevention and control nurses:

Tel: **0161 446 3731**