Clostridium difficile (klo-STRID-ee-um DIF-ah-seal), also called C. diff, is a bacteria commonly found in the intestines. Some types of C. diff create toxins (poisons) that make children sick, especially if there is a lot of bacteria in the intestines.

Most C. diff infections happen in the hospital during or after someone takes antibiotics. A child can also get sick from C. diff weeks after going home from the hospital or stopping antibiotics. Antibiotics can kill the normal bacteria in the intestines, which allows a lot of C. diff to grow.

Children also become sick from C. diff if they have stomach or bowel surgeries. A child in the hospital for a long time, or who has a serious illness or immune system problem, is also at risk for C. diff. Touching items dirty with stool (poop) and then touching the mouth area can also cause infection.

C. diff bacteria are common in the environment. They can survive for months on surfaces not cleaned and sterilized properly.

**What are the symptoms of C. diff?**
- At least 3 loose stools within 24 hours
- Fever
- Nausea
- Dehydration (loss of body fluids)
- Stomach pain, tenderness or cramping
- Loss of appetite

**How is C. diff diagnosed?**
To find out if your child has C. diff, the caregiver will take a stool (poop) sample and send it to the lab for testing. Your child’s nurse or healthcare provider should know the test results within a few hours.

**How will my child’s healthcare provider treat C. diff?**
The doctor will order antibiotics to treat C. diff and kill the bacteria. Your child will take these for about 10 days. An IV (small tube that goes into the vein) may be placed so your child can receive medicines and fluids while in the hospital.

**Are there any complications from C. diff infections?**
If not treated with antibiotics and fluids, C. diff can cause low blood pressure and electrolytes (body salt) to be too high or too low. It can also lead to blood infections, stomach pain, intestinal problems and other complications.
How do healthcare providers prevent C. diff infections in the hospital?

Even if C. diff is treated, the germs can still spread to others. While your child is in the hospital, you and other caregivers can work together to keep C. diff from spreading.

Your child’s healthcare provider will:

• Clean their hands with soap and water after caring for each patient. They can use alcohol-based hand rub before they enter the room, but they must use soap and water after caring for your child. Alcohol-based hand rub does not kill all C. diff germs.

• Wear gloves and gowns over their clothing while caring for your child. They will remove them before leaving the room.

• Put your child in “contact precautions” isolation. Children cannot leave the room while they have diarrhea because C. diff can spread to other patients. Sometimes healthcare providers will decide it is safe for children to go for walks, or wheelchair or wagon rides. However, they cannot go to common areas in the hospital, such as gift shops or cafeterias.

• Put your child in a private room whenever possible. If there is no private room, your child will share a room with other patients with C. diff.

• Clean and sanitize medical equipment and often-touched areas in your child’s hospital room with bleach. This is the best disinfectant for C. diff.

• Give antibiotics only when needed.

How can I prevent C. diff infections in the hospital?

• Make sure healthcare providers clean their hands before and after caring for your child.

• Clean your own hands often, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before eating.

• Wear gloves and use a changing mat when changing diapers.

• Wear gloves and gowns if your child’s caregiver asks you to.

• Wash your hands when you leave the room.

How can my child’s visitors prevent C. diff infections?

Your child’s visitors should:

• Wash their hands well when entering and leaving the room

• Wear gloves and gowns (only if the caregiver asks them to)
When can my child go home?
A child with C. diff can usually go home when the diarrhea stops. Your child also needs to be finished with IV antibiotic treatment.
It is also important for your child to have enough body fluids. Children with active diarrhea lose more water than they take in. This makes them sicker. If your child gets diarrhea again after going home, tell your healthcare provider immediately.

How can I prevent C. diff infections when my child goes home?
Your child can return to everyday routines after leaving the hospital. The diarrhea will often be better or gone before your child goes home. This makes spreading C. diff to others much less likely. However, take these steps to protect your child from getting another C. diff infection or spreading it to others.

• Make sure your child takes antibiotics exactly as the healthcare provider said. Don’t stop before the medicine is gone, and don’t let your child skip doses or take half-doses.

• Do not ask your child’s healthcare provider for antibiotics to treat common colds or viruses. Antibiotics treat only infections.

• Clean hands often and well, especially after using the bathroom, changing diapers, and before preparing food or eating. Good hand washing means using soap and scrubbing fingers, palms and nails for at least 20 seconds.

• Make sure people who live with you clean their hands often and well.

• If your child gets diarrhea again after going home, tell your healthcare provider immediately.

• Follow other instructions from your child’s healthcare provider.

What if I have more questions?
If you have questions about C. diff infections, call your child’s healthcare provider.

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