**Clostridium difficile**

Frequently Asked Questions for Healthcare Professionals

**Background on Clostridium difficile:**

*Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile*) is an important cause of infectious disease death in the United States. *C. difficile* was estimated to cause almost half a million infections in the United States in 2011. Approximately 83,000 of the patients who developed *C. difficile* experienced at least one recurrence and 29,000 died within 30 days of the initial diagnosis.

Poor prescribing practices put patients at risk for *C. difficile* infections. More than half of all hospitalized patients will get an antibiotic at some point during their hospital stay, but studies have shown that 30-50% of antibiotics prescribed in hospitals are unnecessary or incorrect. *C. difficile* infections can be prevented by using infection control recommendations and more careful antibiotic use. The clinical environment of care can also pose a risk for transmission, and therefore the role of Environmental Services (EVS) Technicians is critically important in the infection prevention and control program.

**What can Nursing Professionals do to reduce the risk and transmission?**

- Early Identification and Containment of suspected or confirmed patients with *Clostridium difficile*
- Appropriate Cleaning/Disinfection of Equipment and the Environment
- Hand Hygiene for the EVS Professional, Healthcare Team, and the Patient
- Antibiotic Stewardship to reduce the development of the disease

**What else can Nurses do to reduce the risk?**

Nursing professionals and technicians should work collaboratively with colleagues in nursing, infection prevention and control, patient safety, and infectious diseases to target *Clostridium difficile* infections and challenges. Focus should be paid to the clinical environment of care, the proper use of disinfectants, hand hygiene, adherence to isolation precautions, and antibiotic stewardship.

**Additional Resources:**
US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: