



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:

http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/organisms/cdiff/Cdiff_infect.html