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# C. difficile infection

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## Overview

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*Clostridium difficile* (klos-TRID-e-um dif-uh-SEEL), often called *C. difficile* or *C. diff*, is a bacterium that can cause symptoms ranging from diarrhea to life-threatening inflammation of the colon.

Illness from *C. difficile* most commonly affects older adults in hospitals or in long-term care facilities and typically occurs after use of antibiotic medications. However, studies show increasing rates of *C. difficile* infection among people traditionally not considered high risk, such as younger and healthy individuals without a history of antibiotic use or exposure to health care facilities.

Each year in the United States, about a half million people get sick from *C. difficile*, and in recent years, *C. difficile* infections have become more frequent, severe and difficult to treat.

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## Symptoms

Some people carry the bacterium *C. difficile* in their intestines but never become sick, though they may still spread the infection. Signs and symptoms usually develop within five to 10 days after starting a course of antibiotics, but may occur as soon as the first day or up to two months later.

### Mild to moderate infection

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