



## **PUBLIC NOTIFICATION**

**November 6, 2009**

### **Unit B3: Outbreak – *Clostridium difficile* Associated Disease (CDAD)**

Over the past 30 days, there have been six confirmed cases of CDAD that are linked to one particular medical unit (B3).

This is considered an outbreak as defined by the Ministry of Health & Long Term Care.

There are currently only two of the outbreak cases that remain symptomatic and are on Additional Precautions (isolation) on the unit.

B3 admissions and transfers are not restricted. This will be reviewed weekly.

Programs and services across the hospital are unaffected.

We will provide updates as new information is available or the situation changes.

Everyone's compliance with appropriate hand hygiene and infection prevention and control practices is mandatory and vital to reducing healthcare associated infections. Please review the attached information sheet.

If you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact Infection Control at PRHC.

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# Clostridium difficile Associated Disease

Prepared by: Infection Control, Peterborough Regional Health Centre

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## Questions & Answers

This fact sheet provides basic information only. It must not take the place of medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Always talk to a healthcare professional about any health concerns you have, and before you make any changes to your diet, lifestyle or treatment.

### WHAT IS CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE?

*Clostridium difficile* is a bacterium (germ) that produces a toxin and causes diarrhea and more serious intestinal conditions such as colitis.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE ASSOCIATED DISEASE (CDAD)?

Symptoms include:

- Watery diarrhea (at least three bowel movements per day for two or more days)
- Fever
- Loss of appetite
- Nausea
- Abdominal pain/tenderness

### HOW DO I GET CDAD?

People in good health usually do not get CDAD. People who have other illnesses or conditions requiring prolonged use of antibiotics and the elderly are at greater risk of acquiring this disease.

*Clostridium difficile* can be part of the normal bacteria that live in the large intestine – found in the feces. People can become infected if they touch items or surfaces that are contaminated with feces and then touch their mouth or mucous membranes.

*Clostridium difficile* has also been found on people's hands and in the environment surrounding infected patients.

### WHAT CAN I DO ABOUT IT?

If CDAD is suspected, you will be asked to give a stool sample that will be tested for the toxin.

Most importantly, you and your visitors should pay particular attention to good hand washing with soap and water and follow the instructions as given to you by the health care staff.



### WHY ARE PRECAUTIONS NEEDED?

Precautions (CONTACT PRECAUTIONS) are needed because surfaces like toilets and common areas that hands touch can become contaminated with the bacteria. The bacteria can survive for a long time if they are not properly cleaned. In order to prevent spread to other patients in the hospital, it will be necessary for everyone to follow these precautions.

### WHAT ARE THESE PRECAUTIONS?

You will be placed in a private room (if one is available) and your activities outside the room will be limited.

You will need to take special care with hand washing. Ask your nurse if you have questions about how to wash your hands properly. Hands must be washed after using the toilet or bedpan, before eating and every time you leave your room.

It is also very important for all staff and visitors to wash their hands when they come into and when they leave your room. Do not be shy about reminding everyone to wash.

A **CONTACT PRECAUTIONS** sign will be posted to remind everyone about the precautions. Staff will wear gloves and sometimes gowns if they expect to come in contact with the environment around you or stool, for example, with some toileting type procedures. Sometimes equipment (e.g. commodes) may be left in your room specifically for your use.

# Clostridium difficile Associated Diarrhea

## WILL I NEED TO BE TESTED AGAIN TO SEE IF I STILL HAVE IT?

NO – This is not recommended. Retesting is not necessary to determine the end of precautions.

## HOW LONG ARE THE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS NECESSARY?

The precautions are to be maintained until 72 hours after you no longer have symptoms of diarrhea.

## WILL I BE TREATED?

Mild diarrhea may resolve as soon as the antibiotics that caused the symptoms in the first place are no longer being taken.

More serious diarrhea can last longer without therapy. If you need to be treated your doctor will order an antibiotic (usually called Flagyl) to be taken by mouth.



## HOW LONG WILL THE DIARRHEA LAST?

The length of time will vary for each individual. Usually 2 to 3 days after beginning treatment.

## WILL MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS CATCH THIS FROM ME?

Healthy people who are not taking antibiotics are at very low risk of getting this disease.

Their best protection against even a small risk is to wash their hands after visiting you and follow the precautions.

## Hand washing ↳ the key to Infection Control

## WHAT ABOUT WHEN I GO HOME?

Remember to wash your hands with soap and water. (see **BACK TO BASICS** in next column)

Clean surfaces in bathrooms, kitchens and other areas on a regular basis with household detergent/disinfectants.

Finish whatever treatment your doctor has prescribed for the diarrhea.

Immediately report symptoms of abdominal pain, diarrhea, bloody diarrhea, fever or any other concerns to your doctor.



## GETTING BACK TO BASICS!!

### WHEN TO WASH YOUR HANDS:

- Whenever your hands become obviously soiled
- After using the toilet, blowing your nose, covering a sneeze etc.
- Before eating, drinking or handling food.

### HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS:

1. Wet hands with warm/cool water before you add the soap.
2. One squirt of soap is adequate to remove germs and clean hands.
3. Work soap into later with friction for 15 to 30 seconds. Don't forget the backs, sides, thumbs, webs and nail beds of your hands.
4. Continue to use friction with rinsing soap.
5. Pat your hands dry with paper towel.
6. Turn taps off with the paper towel.
7. Discard the paper towel.

### WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- Infection Control @ Peterborough Regional Health Centre: **743-2121 ext. 3956**
- The Peterborough County-City Health Unit: **743-1000**