



Preventing Spread of Clostridium Difficile in Your Hospital

Clostridium difficile (*C. difficile*) is a bacteria with toxin producing spores that cause gastrointestinal infections in humans. *C. difficile* bacteria is commonly in the intestines of healthy people. When a person takes an antibiotic, some of the normal bacteria die allowing the *C. difficile* to multiply. An infection with *C. difficile* can cause mild to life threatening diarrhea and intestinal inflammation. *C. difficile* spores are more difficult to kill and can live on surfaces for months. As the bacteria is spread by contact with feces, good hand hygiene with soap and water, not alcohol based gels, and cleaning with hypochlorite (bleach) product is important. *C. difficile* infections have shown to extend hospital stay and increase the risk of acquiring other nosocomial infections. In the United States, the estimated cost to health care is 1.1 billion dollars per year.¹

Specific Measures Your Hospital Can Implement

1. Use antibiotics judiciously; exposure to certain antibiotics or use of multiple antibiotics increases the chances of getting *C. difficile* infections.
2. Hand hygiene –
 - Wash hands using soap and water. (Alcohol- based hand gels may not be as effective against spore forming bacteria.²)
 - Achieve excellent hand hygiene compliance.
 - CEO and C-suite monthly monitoring of hand hygiene compliance by unit to achieve specific hospital targets – personal visit by CEO to managers of units below target.
3. Clean surfaces with disinfectant that is an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) -registered hypochlorite or diluted household bleach.

¹ *Implications of the changing face of Clostridium difficile disease for healthcare practitioners- AJIC Vol.35 No.4, May 2007*

² *CDC Information for Healthcare Provider*

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4. Use contact precautions for known or suspected patients with C. difficile infections and place them in private rooms when possible.
5. Use disposable equipment if possible.
6. Monitor high risk patients for developing C. difficile infection, such as patients with: use of multiple antibiotics, GI surgery, increased length of stay in hospital, advanced age, immunocompromised condition, and serious underlying illness.
7. Reduce transmission through prompt diagnosis and effective treatment.
8. Educate patients with C. difficile infections. (Information for patients and family: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_CdiffFAQ_general.html).
9. Educate staff about C. difficile infections. (Information for healthcare providers: http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/id_CdiffFAQ_hcp.html).
10. Participate in WSHA Safe Table Learning Collaborative on Eliminating Hospital Acquired Infections – (*Travel reimbursement for critical access hospitals is available.*)

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