

# Clostridium difficile (GDH positive, toxin negative)

## Infection Control Team

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have been tested for Clostridium difficile and the tests have found that you are GDH positive, toxin negative. The leaflet explains what this means and what happens next.

#### What is Clostridium difficile?

Clostridium difficile (sometimes called C. diff) is type of bacteria. They live in the intestine of a small proportion (less than five per cent) of healthy adults. They are usually kept in check by normal 'good' bacteria that live in the intestine so they are harmless and do not cause infection.

However, infection can occur after someone has taken antibiotics to treat another illness. This kills off the 'good' bacteria as well as the 'bad' ones and allows C. diff to multiply and produce toxins (poisons) which damage the cells lining the intestine. This can lead to diarrhoea and inflammation of the bowel.

## How do I know if I have a C. diff infection?

A sample of diarrhoea is sent to the hospital laboratory where the diagnosis can be confirmed. The laboratory carries out various tests.

The Department of Health has recommended a two stage testing process:

### Stage one – to test if you have C. diff in your bowel

Stage one of these tests looks for a chemical called glutamate dehydrogenase (GDH). If this is found in your sample, this means that you have C. diff in your bowel and the result is therefore called 'GDH positive'.

### Stage two – to test if it is causing you an infection

Stage two tests are carried out on all GDH positive samples, to see if there are any toxins in the sample. These toxins show that C. diff is causing an infection.

### Your result

Our tests have shown that your sample is GDH positive but you do not have toxins present – your sample is **GDH positive, toxin negative**. This means you have C. diff in your bowel but do not have a C. diff infection.

## What does this mean for me?

The diarrhoea you are experiencing is probably due to other causes, such as antibiotics. Your doctor will review your medication and make any necessary changes as sometimes antibiotics can cause the C. diff bacteria to start producing toxins.

The majority of patients do not need treatment if they have a GDH positive, toxin negative result. However, if your symptoms are very severe, your doctor may decide to give you treatment.

It is important to drink plenty whilst you have diarrhoea to stop yourself becoming dehydrated.

If your diarrhoea continues, we may need to test further samples.

## What else should I do?

Although you do not have a C. diff infection, it is still possible for the bacteria present in your bowel to spread to other people.

C. diff bacteria come out in stools in the form of spores. Someone with C. diff excretes large numbers of spores which can live in the environment for a long time. These spores contaminate the surfaces and equipment surrounding patients such as lockers, commodes and bedpans.

These areas can be a source of infection for other patients, if they touch these surfaces and then touch their nose or mouth. The risk of infection increases when patients have diarrhoea and bathrooms and toilets are shared.

C. diff bacteria can be spread from one person to another by poor hand hygiene (not enough hand washing).

To avoid the spread of the bacteria, strict hygiene measures and thorough cleaning is essential.

**Washing your hands using soap and water is extremely important.**

**Alcohol hand sanitiser does not kill the C. diff bacteria.**

## Can I have visitors?

Yes, however, your family and friends should protect themselves when they are visiting you by:

- Washing their hands with soap and water:
  - when leaving your room
  - after using the toilet
  - before eating and before preparing food
- Not visiting if they are unwell or have recently had diarrhoea.
- Not sitting on hospital beds when visiting.
- Observing any restrictions that are in place as these help us to make sure the ward is cleaned thoroughly throughout the day.

Visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons when visiting unless they are caring for you.

## What do I need to do at home?

If you are well, having a GDH positive, toxin negative result will not stop you from going home.

It is important you tell your GP or healthcare provider of the GDH positive, toxin negative result when you see them in the future, especially if you receive antibiotic treatment.

We will also tell your GP about your GDH positive, toxin negative result.

### General good hygiene precautions

It is sensible to be very hygienic when you are at home, even if you do not have an infection. Wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet, before preparing food and before eating. Keep bathrooms, showers and toilets, including taps, toilet doors and toilet flush handles clean.

Do not share personal hygiene items, such as toothbrushes and towels, with other family members.

## If I am worried – who can I talk to?

If you want to discuss C. diff further, you can talk to:

- Your medical team
- The Infection Control Team on 01384 244174 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

## Reference

Department of Health (2012). *Updated guidance on the diagnosis and reporting of clostridium difficile*. London: DH publications.

Available at:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/215135/dh\\_133016.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/215135/dh_133016.pdf)

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Infection Control Team on 01384 244174 (8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

### **This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta broșura poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

یہ کتابچہ آپ کو بڑے حروف کی لکھائی، سمعی صورت اور دیگر زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جا سکتا ہے۔ برائے مہربانی فون نمبر 08000730510 پر رابطہ کریں۔