**PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET**

**CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE**

**What is Clostridium difficile?**

*Clostridium difficile* is a cause of diarrhoea, which may be acquired in hospital. In most cases it causes a relatively mild illness but occasionally, particularly in the very frail and elderly, it can be serious.

Patients at an increased risk of the infection are the elderly, those receiving broad spectrum antibiotics, have had a prolonged admission in hospital or those who have a serious illness or condition.

**What are the symptoms of Clostridium difficile?**

Symptoms can include:

- Mild to severe diarrhoea
- Blood stained stools
- Fever and/or cramps in the abdomen

A small percentage of the population carry the *Clostridium difficile* organism in their gut, with no ill effects. However, when in hospital, almost all patients who develop this type of diarrhoea are taking, or have recently been given, antibiotics. Though diarrhoea is the most common symptom, stomach pains, bloating and fever may also occur.

For most people this is a mild but uncomfortable illness and they will make a full recovery. Some elderly patients can become ill with dehydration caused by the diarrhoea and occasionally patients may develop more serious bowel problems.

**How is Clostridium difficile diagnosed?**

The infection is diagnosed by bacteriological testing which shows the presence of toxins in your faeces specimen.

**How can it be treated?**

It is always necessary to give specific treatment for the *Clostridium difficile* infection. This will be discussed with the Consultant Microbiologist and your medical team.

**How is the spread of Clostridium difficile controlled?**

The most effective way to prevent the bacteria from spreading is by hand washing with soap and water. This includes staff thoroughly washing their hands before and after contact with the patient. You should always wash your hands with soap and water after toileting.

Because the bacteria form spores, it can survive for long periods of time in the environment – for example on floors and around toilets. You will be isolated in a side room with the door closed to prevent the spread of infection.

Staff will wear disposable gloves and aprons when caring for you and will wash their hands with soap and water before and after attending to you or your room environment.
Can I have visitors?

Yes you can have visitors however while you remain symptomatic with diarrhoea we advise you not to leave the ward. On entering and leaving the room your visitors must wash their hands with soap and water. Please refrain from visiting other patients on the ward.

Visitors will be asked to wear disposable gloves and aprons when visiting you.

Because most patients with this condition have recently received antibiotics, patients’ relatives are at a minimal risk of catching the infection. However if any of your visitors are receiving antibiotics they could be more at risk of acquiring the infection. It is not advisable to be visited by young children while you remain symptomatic with diarrhoea.

Contact us

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