

C. difficile Infection Patient Journey

Symptoms Appear

- diarrhea
- abdominal pain
- weight loss
- loss of appetite
- nausea/vomiting
- fatigue
- dehydration



What is C. difficile infection?

C. difficile infection, or CDI for short, occurs when the *Clostridioides difficile* bacterium grows out of control in the gut. It is the most common cause of infectious diarrhea in hospitals and long-term care facilities.

Risk factors include:

- recent antibiotic use
- older age (65+)
- hospitalization (e.g., surgery)
- contact in a healthcare facility
- long-term care
- severe underlying illness
- immunocompromised
- receiving chemotherapy
- prior C. difficile infection
- taking proton pump inhibitors (PPIs)

The Gastrointestinal Society thanks its staff; the patient participants in our focus group; Dr. Ted Steiner, infectious diseases specialist; Dr. James Gray, gastroenterologist; and Anne-Marie Stelluti, registered dietitian for their generous contributions to this project. We also thank Ferring Canada for an unrestricted educational grant to help us map this complex patient journey. © 2022 Gastrointestinal Society.

Physician Visit

Some patients are already in hospital or a long-term care facility. Others will go to a family doctor, clinic, or specialist.

- review medical history
- review symptoms
- order tests

Visit **badgut.org** for more information on C. difficile infection.



Testing

- stool tests
- blood tests
- endoscopy (rarely)

Negative Results

If symptoms persist, but it is not CDI:

- further investigations
- referral to other healthcare practitioner

Positive Results

Physician provides diagnosis; often refers patient to a specialist (gastroenterologist, infectious disease specialist).

Symptoms Persist

Return to physician for a new treatment and/or further investigations.

Symptoms Return

Return to physician.

Symptoms Resolve

Resume normal day-to-day life, but be cautious of chance of recurrence in the next few weeks.

Symptom-Free

Resume normal day-to-day life.

Treatment

May include:

- cessation of certain medications
- antibiotics
- medications to control symptoms
- fecal microbiota transfer
- hygiene (wash hands, clean surfaces)
- nutrition and hydration
- surgery (rare)

Monitor & Support

Support from both healthcare team and community.

- regular doctor visits
- lab tests as required
- support groups
- mental health care
- dietitian for nutrition support