

Long-term Care Antibiotic Awareness



What to Know about *Clostridioides difficile* Infections

Clostridioides difficile, also known as *Clostridium difficile* or *C. diff*, is an infection of the gut that most commonly affects older adults in hospitals or long-term care facilities. It often occurs after a person has taken antibiotics. Taking antibiotics when they are not needed may kill the good bacteria in our bodies and allow bad bacteria, like *C. diff*, to grow and make people sick. This infection has gotten more difficult to treat due to antibiotic resistance. Symptoms of *C. diff* can range from mild to severe and may include:

- ❖ Diarrhea
- ❖ Stomach ache
- ❖ Fever
- ❖ Chills
- ❖ Bloating
- ❖ Loss of appetite

While not all *C. diff* infections can be prevented, good handwashing by residents, visitors, and staff can help. Effective cleaning of living spaces and medical care areas is also important. Since *C. diff* commonly occurs during or after antibiotic use, it is important to make sure that antibiotics are used appropriately. Don't be afraid to ask your healthcare provider if the antibiotic that is prescribed is absolutely necessary.

About Antibiotics

Antibiotics are only intended for treating infections caused by bacteria. They are not effective against illness caused by viruses. Using antibiotics when they are not needed, or are used incorrectly, can lead to antibiotic resistance which means that common antibiotics may not get rid of infections caused by these germs. Other unwanted problems such as bad reactions, diarrhea, *C. diff*, and allergies can also occur. Residents who use antibiotics are at increased risk of getting a *C. diff* infection. If an antibiotic is given, the resident should take the medicine as instructed. The nursing staff will ensure that all doses are given.

