

Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services Risk Management Protocols

Subject: C. DIFF – CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE

What is it?

CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE (C DIFF) is a bacteria that can colonize or infect people and is resistant to many antibiotics. This bacteria normally found in the human bowel can develop into an infection called Clostridium Difficile colitis of the bowel if the normal body flora becomes unbalanced (normal bacteria in the bowel are eliminated or significantly reduced) through the chronic use of antibiotics. Acute and long term care facilities have seen a dramatic increase of Clostridium Difficile colitis infection among their chronically ill population. Medically fragile individuals, living in the community are also subject to this infection. It is the goal of this protocol to ensure proper management for infected individuals and prevention of the spread of infection to other individuals and personnel.

Common Definitions:

Colonized Individual (carrier): Any person who is found to be culture-positive for CDIFF, but has no signs or symptoms of infection caused by the organism (asymptomatic).

Community Acquired Infection: An infection acquired from a non-hospital source.

Decolonize: To administer topical and/or systemic antimicrobial agents for the purpose of eradicating C Difficile colitis in an individual.

Infected Person: Any individual who has laboratory and clinical evidence (symptoms of illness) of Clostridium Difficile colitis.

Nosocomial Infection: An infection acquired in a hospital.

Standard Precautions: A system of protective actions that assumes that all body substances may contain potentially infectious material. It requires good hand washing technique and use of barriers such as gloves, gowns, masks and eye protection to prevent transmission based on source of infection.

Universal Precautions: A system of protective actions similar to Standard Precautions but which apply only to blood spills or body fluids.

What risk does this present?

- Sepsis – (Life threatening condition caused by overwhelming infection of the blood stream)
- Dehydration – Excessive loss of body fluid
- Risk of outbreak or transmission to other individuals who may be in poor health or have a weakened immune system

How is Clostridium Difficile managed?

- It is the expectation of the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) that C-Diff is managed in the individual's environment(s) with as little disruption as possible to their routine
- Universal Precautions
- See procedure manual details
- Information regarding the individual's status relative to this issue is to be handled in the same manner as any medical information according to HIPAA regulations.
- Notify the DDS Area Office Nurse, and other relevant programs, immediately, of a new diagnosis or change in diagnosis regarding this issue

Where and to Whom do these recommendations and protocols apply?

These guidelines apply to the care of any individual who has Clostridium Difficile in all settings. It applies to all staff.

Where can I find additional help?

- DPH – www.mass.gov/dph
- CDC – www.cdc.gov
- NIH – www.nih.gov