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Infection Of The Colon: What Are The Dangers?

The words "colon infection" can actually refer to a variety of problems related to the human colon.

When used by medical professionals however, these words usually refer to an infection caused by the *Clostridium difficile* bacteria (also called *C. difficile* or just *C. diff*).

Older adults who are living in a long term care facility or staying in a hospital are among those most likely to get a *C. diff* colon infection. This is due to the fact that they're usually taking antibiotics.

Antibiotics - besides killing bacteria that make us sick - often also kill helpful bacteria that live in our digestive tract and help us digest our food. Without enough of this beneficial bacteria, *C. diff* takes over and grows rapidly. When *Clostridium difficile* grows, it produces toxins that damage cells in the lining of the intestines and colon. The result is inflammation and pain.

Sometimes a colon infection caused by *C. diff* is mild. If so, your infection may subside when you stop taking the antibiotic. But if you have a more severe infection, you may have to get a prescription for an entirely different type of antibiotic that will counteract *C. diff*.

Several types of antibiotics seem more likely to produce *C. diff* colon infections. Among these are clindamycin, fluoroquinolones, cephalosporins, and penicillin.

It's not hard to find *C. diff* bacteria in the natural environment. It's abundant in water and dirt. It can also be found on plants. This bacteria floats in the air and can also be found in the metabolic wastes of humans and animals. Therefore it prospers in area where there's poor sanitation.

Avoiding *C. diff* bacteria can be done the same way you protect yourself from germs of all kinds: keep surfaces at home clean and wash your hands a lot. *C. difficile* is capable of producing spores that can live on counter tops and such surfaces for weeks or even months, When you touch a surface that has *C. diff* germs on it, and then touch your mouth, they can work their way down your digestive tract and start a colon infection.

The fact that you have *C. diff* germs in your digestive tract doesn't always mean your going to get sick. But individuals who have *C. diff* can certainly spread them to other people who will then develop a colon infection in turn.

Recently, a larger number of *Clostridium difficile* cases have been reported than was typical in preceding years. Medical researchers report that a new type of *C. diff* strain, which is more aggressive than preceding types, has developed and is spreading. It is resistant to medications that worked before, and has resulted in several outbreaks in the last decade.

It may take months for a colon infection to develop and symptoms to appear after *C. difficile* germs invade your digestive tract. When colon infection symptoms do appear, they may include those detailed below.

Abdominal cramping, along with tenderness and discomfort in the lower digestive tract.

- * Very watery bowel movements and diarrhea that lasts at least two days.
- * Colitis, which is a type of severe stomach inflammation.
- * There might also be blood or pus in the stool, possibly including pieces of raw tissue..
- * Nausea accompanied by fever.
- * Lack of appetite, probably accompanied by weight loss..
- * Signs and symptoms of dehydration.

If these symptoms persist for several days, call your physician.

Once your doctor has established that you have a colon infection caused by *C. diff*, he or she will probably recommend that you discontinue the antibiotic that contributed to the problem. This will almost certainly reduce the intensity of your colon infection symptoms, but further treatment treatment may be needed nonetheless.

Ironically, you may still be able to take certain other antibiotics. Several are available that will stop C. diff while allowing healthy bacteria to grow. The most frequently antibiotics for a colon infection are metronidazole and vancomycin. Both these medications may have side effects like nausea, and they sometimes leave a bitter taste in your mouth. It's especially important not to drink alcoholic beverages when taking metronidazole.

Your doctor may also suggest taking certain probiotics that have been proven to help restore your intestinal tract. A type of yeast known as *Saccharomyces boulardii* can also help when combined with a range of other medications.

Surgery isn't usually performed, but is sometimes done in especially severe cases.

Not all the treatments for a colon infection recommended above will work every time. When a colon infection returns, it's usually because the *Clostridium difficile* bacteria was not completely removed in the initial treatment. It can also come back because the individual has been exposed to a different strain.

Click on [colon infection causes](#) and [ulcerative colitis symptoms](#) to learn more about [the human colon](#). Neal Kennedy is a former radio and TV talk show host with a special interest in health and fitness topics.

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