How do I wash my clothes and bedding at home?

Nightwear / clothing / bedding soiled with faeces should be washed separately (from the rest of the family washing) on the hottest wash possible for the type of fabric. Items that are not soiled can be washed as normal. Ironing and tumble drying will help to kill off any remaining germs.

Where can I get further advice?

If you have any questions about Clostridium difficile infection, please speak to your GP, practice nurse, community or named nurse and healthcare worker.

NHS South of Tyne Primary Care Trust
Community Infection Control Team
Telephone number: 0191 283 1000

NHS South of Tyne and Wear is committed to raising the standard of written information to patients, their carers, people who use the NHS and general public.

This information can be made available in another format or language on request. Please contact the Communications and PR Team Tel: 0191 529 7118 Email: mopil@sotw.nhs.uk

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Working together to make South of Tyne and Wear
HEALTHY FOR YOU
What is Clostridium difficile?
Clostridium difficile is one of many different bacteria living in the normal healthy bowel. When certain medical conditions are treated with antibiotics Clostridium difficile can cause diarrhoea and colitis. This is an infection that mostly affects elderly patients with chronic medical conditions being treated with antibiotics.

How may the illness affect me?
• Clostridium difficile may cause diarrhoea which may range from a mild disturbance of the bowel to more severe watery diarrhoea
• Other symptoms are fever, abdominal pain and feeling generally unwell, however for many people, the illness is usually mild
• As a result of your diarrhoea you may become dehydrated

How is it diagnosed?
It is difficult to diagnose Clostridium difficile on symptoms alone. The infection is normally diagnosed by carrying out laboratory test on the patient's stools.

How does it spread?
Some people who are symptom free can be carriers of Clostridium difficile and this has no effect on their health. It is, however, possible for this illness to be spread from person-to-person, particularly if high standards of personal hygiene are not maintained.

The patient who has Clostridium difficile may soil with faeces areas such as toilets, bathrooms and bedding. These areas should be cleaned up as soon as possible and hands washed thoroughly to avoid spreading the germ to other areas.

How can it be treated?
Clostridium difficile is usually treated with different antibiotics to the ones that have caused the original illness.

It is very important to complete the whole course of treatment as prescribed by your healthcare worker.

You should also drink plenty of fluids to reduce the risk of dehydration.

Who is at risk of getting Clostridium difficile?
The risk of the disease increases in patients with the following:
• People taking antibiotics
• People who have had stomach surgery
• People who are in hospital for a long time
• People who have a poor immune system
• People over 65 years of age

Remember always wash your hands well with soap and water:
• After using or cleaning the toilet
• Before preparing food or drink
• After handling or washing soiled bedding, linen or clothing

Alcohol gel does not kill Clostridium difficile, you must use soap and water.