

Treatment sought for diarrhea strain

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A mutant strain of diarrhea is pushing the condition's ongoing epidemic, the national Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta said.

Severe *Clostridium difficile* diarrheal disease is caused by a bug carried unknowingly by about 3 percent of the U.S. population, WebMD.com said Friday. Most antibiotics that kill normal bacteria don't affect *C. diff*, which is attacked by normal bacteria found in the body.

Once confined to elderly, hospitalized patients, the new strain is infecting young, non-hospitalized people, WebMD.com said.

Symptoms range from mild diarrhea to life-threatening colon infection, WebMD.com said. The new strain can produce up to 20 times more of the toxins that normal *C. diff* produces, the medical Web site said.

Scientists said several factors may have caused the bug to mutate, WebMD.com said. These include the bug's becoming resistant to commonly used antibiotics and certain heartburn drugs being linked to *C. diff* infections. Or, possibly, a new bug is moving across the globe.

Scientists at the University of Illinois have studied the antibiotic vancomycin's effect on the new *C. diff* strain, WebMD.com said. So far, the mutant strain hasn't shown resistance to the antibiotic.

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