

# Study reports increasing incidence of *Clostridium difficile* infection

May 21 2012

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A study presented by Mayo Clinic researchers during Digestive Disease Week 2012 provides clear evidence that the number of people contracting the hard-to-control and treat bacterial infection *Clostridium difficile* (*C. difficile* or *C. diff*) is increasing, and that the infection is commonly contracted outside of the hospital.

"We have seen *C. difficile* infection as a cause for diarrhea in humans for more than 30 years, and the incidence of infections has been increasing in the last decade," says Sahil Khanna, M.B.B.S., Mayo Clinic Division of Gastroenterology and Hepatology, and lead author of the study. "It has been believed that the typical profile of a person with *C. difficile* is an older patient, taking antibiotics, while in the hospital. For the first time, we have described a significantly increased incidence of *C. difficile* in children with diarrhea in a population-based cohort. Importantly, we also found that more than three-quarters of cases of *C. difficile* in children are being contracted in the community, not in the hospital."

Results of the study showed that the incidence of *C. difficile* infection (CDI) in children was more than 12 times higher between 2004 and 2009, compared to the period 1991-1997 (32.6 cases per 100,000 vs. 2.6). In addition, 75 percent of cases were "community-acquired," meaning that the patients had not been hospitalized for at least four weeks prior to contracting *C. difficile*.

*C. difficile* is an environmental infection, commonly seen on surfaces in the hospital and described to be present in some [food sources](#), including

[ground beef](#). Because the [infection](#) can be spread from person to person, Mayo Clinic researchers recommend practicing prevention, including:

- Wash hands with soap and water.
- Clean suspected contaminated surfaces with bleach-based solutions.
- Avoid contact with people who are known to have CDI.
- Take extra hygiene precautions if you are living with a person who has CDI or who works in a health care setting where a person might be exposed to patients with CDI.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

Citation: Study reports increasing incidence of Clostridium difficile infection (2012, May 21)  
retrieved 3 May 2024 from

<https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-05-incidence-clostridium-difficile-infection.html>

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