

Using human stool to treat *C. diff* is safe, effective

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A novel therapy that uses donated human stool to treat the deadly and contagious *C.diff* infection is safe and highly effective, according to a Henry Ford Hospital study.

Researchers found that 43 of 49 patients recovered swiftly after treatment and had no adverse complications from *C.diff* three months later. Treatment is performed either through a nasogastric tube or colonoscopy on an outpatient or inpatient basis.

Mayur Ramesh, M.D., a Henry Ford Infectious Diseases physician and senior author of the study, says the treatment, while appearing unconventional, has striking results.

"More than 90 percent of the patients in our study were cured of their *C.diff* infection," says Dr. Ramesh. "This treatment is a viable option for patients who are not responding to conventional treatment and who want to avoid surgery."

The study is being presented Friday at the annual Infectious Diseases Society of America meeting in San Diego.

In their study, researchers evaluated 49 patients who contracted *Clostridium difficile*, or *C.diff*, a germ that causes diarrhea and other intestinal problems and is linked to 14,000 deaths annually. Symptoms include water diarrhea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea and abdominal pain and tenderness. *C.diff* occurs in patients taking antibiotics, and can

spread from person-to-person contact or from touching contaminated equipment and objects like door knobs.

Patients with a *C.diff* infection are typically treated with the antibiotics [metronidazole](#) or vancomycin. However, surgery could be required to remove the infected part of the intestines. In its study, Henry Ford treated patients between May 2010 and June 2012 with a therapy called intestinal microbiota transplantation (IMT), using donated stool from a healthy family member.

Dr. Ramesh says the healthy stool, when mixed with warm [tap water](#) and administered, helps to re-establish the normal intestinal flora in the patient's [gastrointestinal tract](#). Intestinal flora is healthy bacteria that stimulates the immune system and aids the digestion and absorption of food.

"Patients who receive [treatment](#) through a nasogastric tube don't taste or smell the stool mixture as it's administered," Dr. Ramesh says. "Patients often resume their diet within a couple hours and are feeling better within 24 hours."

Of the 49 [patients](#), 43 fully recovered, four died of causes unrelated to *C.diff*, one had intestinal surgery and one had no improvement.

Provided by Henry Ford Health System

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