

C. diff infection risk rises with antihistamine use to treat stomach acid, study finds

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Patients receiving antihistamines to suppress stomach acid are at greater risk of infection from *Clostridium difficile*, or *C. diff*, a common cause of diarrhea, particularly in health care settings, Mayo Clinic researchers have found. The study focused on histamine 2 receptor antagonists. The researchers found no significant risk for people taking over-the-counter antihistamine drugs, however. The findings appear in the online journal *PLOS ONE*.

Researchers reviewed 35 observations based on 33 separate studies involving *C. diff* and antihistamines used for [stomach acid](#) suppressive therapy. The researchers found a clear association between histamine 2 [receptor antagonists](#) use and *C. diff* infection. They say it was especially pronounced and caused the greatest risk for hospitalized patients receiving antibiotics. "It's not clear why these antihistamines increase the risk of *C. diff* infection, because gastric acid does not affect *C. diff* spores," says senior author Larry Baddour, M.D., a Mayo infectious diseases expert. "However, it may be that vegetative forms of *C. diff*, which are normally killed by stomach acid, survive due to use of stomach acid suppressors and cause infection."

Researchers say the study highlights the need for judicious use of histamine 2 receptor antagonists in hospitalized patients, and that reducing the use of these drugs could significantly reduce the risk of *C. diff* infections.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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