

Guide to Preventing *Clostridium difficile* Infections



About APIC

APIC's mission is to create a safer world through prevention of infection. The association's more than 14,000 members direct infection prevention programs that save lives and improve the bottom line for hospitals and other healthcare facilities. APIC advances its mission through patient safety, implementation science, competencies and certification, advocacy, and data standardization.

mental illness or dementia may not be able to comply with good personal hygiene. Under these conditions, it may be decided to staff these residents with a 1:1 caregiver.

Living arrangements

Although a private room with attached bathroom is ideal, this arrangement is not common in most skilled nursing facilities. When considering potential roommates, select someone who is not taking antibiotics and is not compromised to the point of being susceptible to infections in general. In addition, some facilities may be challenged by having multiple-bed rooms with a shared bathroom. Managing the resident's diarrhea can be difficult in a semi-private room with a shared bathroom. Alternatives include cohorting residents with CDI in the same room; assigning the CDI resident with a roommate that does not use the bathroom; assigning the CDI resident in a room closest to the bathroom; and having the non-CDI resident roommate use a bedside commode. **If the CDI resident must use a bedside commode, line the commode with a plastic bag and absorbent material to reduce healthcare worker exposure to fecal material. An adult brief, sanitary pad, or other absorbent material can be used. The plastic bag can be discarded as regular trash.** If a bedpan is needed, provide a one-time use, disposable bedpan if possible. An alternate is to use a single patient-use bedpan that can be cleaned with a bleach-based disinfectant after each use; however, logistics of disinfection and storage makes this option difficult to accomplish.

Equipment, supplies, and the environment

Discontinue use of rectal thermometers. Medical devices and equipment should be dedicated to single resident use or be disinfected between uses. Personal clothing, linens, and towels can be washed in the usual manner and do not require special handling.⁵ Used dishware, cups, and

utensils can be handled and sanitized in the usual manner.⁵

Surveillance

The CDC offers skilled nursing and assisted living facilities the opportunity to enter data and compare infection rates through a free, voluntary, Internet-based surveillance system called the NHSN. Laboratory based reporting for *Clostridium difficile* began in September 2012 and is available at <http://www.cdc.gov/nhsn/LTC/index.html>. NHSN offers standardized definitions and case finding methods for CDI.

References

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