Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Multidrug Resistant Organisms (MDROs) and Clostridioides difficile (C. diff)

This information explains multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs) and Clostridioides difficile (C. diff), including how they are spread and how infections are treated in the outpatient setting.

What is a multidrug resistant organism (MDRO)?

A multidrug resistant organism (MDRO) is a germ that is resistant to many antibiotics. If a germ is resistant to an antibiotic, it means that some treatments will not work or may be less effective.

Some examples of MDROs are:

- Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)
- Vancomycin resistant Enterococcus (VRE)

These germs can cause a variety of illnesses, including:

- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)

- Pneumonia
- Blood infections
- Wound infections

Infections caused by MDROs can be more difficult to treat, since there are fewer antibiotics that work to treat them.

What is Clostridioides difficile (C. diff)?

Clostridioides difficile, or C. diff, is another germ that is resistant to many antibiotics and difficult to treat. C.diff can cause diarrhea and colitis. Colitis is an inflammation (swelling and redness) of your colon.

What is the difference between being colonized and being infected with an MDRO or C. diff?

A person can be either colonized or infected with a MDRO or C. diff. If a person is colonized, it means that the germ is present on their skin or in their body, but they have no symptoms. If a person is infected, it means that the germ is present on their skin or in their body and it's causing symptoms.

Who is at risk for an MDRO or C. diff infection?

Infections occur more often in people who have received antibiotics in the past and have many hospital and provider

visits.

How are these germs spread?

Most MDRO and C. diff infections are spread by direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids, such as blood, drainage from a wound, urine, bowel movements (stool), or sputum (phlegm).

C. diff infections are spread by direct contact with an infected person's bowel movements.

MDRO and C. diff infections can also spread by contact with equipment or surfaces that have had contact with the germs.

Can these germs spread by touching?

No. Casual contact, such as touching or hugging, doesn't spread MDRO or C. diff infections.

What should I do if I have an MDRO or C. diff infection?

- Take the medication your healthcare provider prescribes. Take it for as long as the healthcare provider tells you. Don't stop taking your medication, even if you're feeling better.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at

least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom or cleaning your wound drainage.
    - If you have a C. diff infection, wash your hands with soap and water rather than using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Ask the people you live with to clean their hands often with soap and water.
- Use a disinfectant, such as Clorox® or Lysol®, to wipe any surface that may come in contact with the germs. Common places that may have been contaminated with the germs are your bathroom, countertops, and faucets.
- Don't share personal items, such as washcloths, bars of soap, razors, or clothes.

Where can I get more information about MDROs and C. diff?

If you have any questions, speak with your healthcare provider. You can also visit the following websites for more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov

New York State Department of Health
www.health.state.ny.us

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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