

This fact sheet is about the importance of promoting prevention of *C. difficile* infections as a key part of quality care.

Nursing homes working on this goal are trying to cut down on infections. Infections are caused by germs, like bacteria and viruses. Germs often spread from person to person. The first focus of this goal is to reduce *C. difficile* infections. But the same methods can also help stop the spread of other germs in a nursing home.

Why is prevention of *C. difficile* infections important?

All healthcare providers have a responsibility to keep their patients and residents safe from complications that can happen while receiving care. Nursing homes today care for many people who would have at one time been in a hospital setting. A growing number of people entering nursing homes are coming directly from hospitals with a plan to get stronger and return to their homes in the community. As a result of these frequent care transitions, complications like healthcare-associated infections which happen in the hospital setting are now more common in nursing homes.

C. difficile infections are among the most serious healthcare complications that impact the nursing home population. These infections can result in malnutrition, increased frailty, and in some cases, hospitalizations and even death. Implementing the strategies to prevent *C. difficile* infections will also improve the overall safety of residents. For example, measures to prevent *C. difficile* will prevent other infections from spreading in nursing homes.

Improving antibiotic use and preventing infections will also reduce costs of care and improve the quality of life for your residents. Recently, *C. difficile* infections became a quality measure for hospitals. Nursing homes now have an opportunity to engage with their hospital partners in addressing and preventing these serious infections to improve the health of their community.

How does a preventing *C. difficile* infection benefit nursing homes?

- Resident and family satisfaction will increase as they see your nursing home's commitment to safe healthcare, and the prevention of infections and their complications.
- Nursing homes will realize cost savings by limiting the increased costs of managing *C. difficile* infections and by reducing hospital transfers.
- If hospitals start being penalized for excess *C. difficile* infections, they may turn to nursing homes with a reputation for high quality of care and a track record of low *C. difficile* infection rates to become preferred providers.
- Nursing homes that are prepared and have strong infection prevention programs will be ready to take advantage of future incentives and payment reforms, including partnering with Accountable Care Organizations.
- Reporting *C. difficile* infection rates is a reality for hospitals now. A similar request for nursing homes is likely in the future.
- Being a participant in this goal, tracking your data and uploading it monthly on the website will give your nursing home a head start on meeting Quality Assurance Performance Improvement (QAPI) requirements for systematic implementation of a quality improvement culture.

How can nursing home leadership help prevent *C. difficile* infections?

- Commit to a goal of preventing *C. difficile* infections: Join National Nursing Home Quality Improvement (NNHQI) Campaign and select this goal. www.nhqualitycampaign.org
- Bring your multi-disciplinary QI team together to look at your current data, discuss the issue and set an achievement target.
- Assess your home's infection prevention program and identify opportunities to improve your practices:
 - Provide educational opportunities for practitioners and staff.
 - Look at your support infrastructure.
- Support efforts to improve antibiotic use in your home
- Use your team to develop a plan and look at the available tools on the NNHQI Campaign website (www.nhqualitycampaign.org) to help you. Help everyone understand what this means to them and get their buy-in. Be sure to include your attending physicians as well as your medical director in this discussion. Their support will be one of the keys to your success.
- Use the Assessment Checklists and Tracking Tools to understand *C. difficile* infection rates, identify trends, and monitor process indicators to find opportunities for improvement.
- Upload your tracking data monthly: show hospitals how you stand out compared to other nursing homes.
- Implement best practice guidelines and toolkits and promote communication and teamwork among all levels of staff.
- Make sure everyone in the nursing home is on board with the initiative and receives periodic updates to track progress.
- Talk to residents and family members about why your home selected this goal and what you hope to accomplish.
- Partner with hospitals and other providers to work as a community toward a common goal.
- Celebrate successes!

For more information, go to the following Centers for Disease Control and Prevention websites:

http://www.cdc.gov/HAI/organisms/cdiff/Cdiff_infect.html

<http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/HAI/index.htm>