

PCRS Green Red Reports

C. difficile infection

In Ireland *C. difficile* infection affects over 2,000 people each year. In 2023, 57% of reported cases were healthcare associated and 31% were community associated.¹ The spectrum of *C. difficile* infection ranges from mild diarrhoea to potentially fatal colitis.

Antibiotic use predisposes to *C difficile* infection. Antibiotics disturb the normal colonic microbiota permitting growth of *C. difficile*.

Reducing risk of C difficile infection.

Almost all antibiotics increase the risk of *C. difficile* infection. Consider if no antibiotic is a viable treatment option in your patient – for instance, for treatment of self-limiting or viral infections. This helps protect patients from the avoidable harm related to unnecessary antibiotic use.

Red antibiotics, such as **co-amoxiclav**, **ciprofloxacin** (and other fluoroquinolones), cephalosporins (such as **cefactor** and **cefuroxime**) and **clindamycin**, are associated with the highest risk of *C difficile* infection. Avoid **Red** antibiotics for first line treatment where possible and refer to guidelines on [antibioticprescribing.ie](https://www.hpsc.ie/antibioticprescribing).

Guidance on treatment of C difficile infection

C. difficile infection can occur while a patient is taking an antibiotic or in the days or weeks after they have finished the antibiotic treatment. Advanced age (65 years or older) and regular exposure to healthcare setting are other important risk factors. For guidance on treatment of patients with *C difficile* visit [Guidance on treatment of confirmed or suspected Clostridioides difficile \(C. difficile\) infection in adults](#)

¹ [HPSC Enhanced Surveillance of Clostridioides difficile infection in Ireland 2023 data](#)