

# News

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## C. Diff Superbug Gaining Strength

**December 8, 2008** — While often getting less attention, the threat of *Clostridium difficile* (C. diff) is quickly catching up with other superbugs, according to a news alert released by AlturaSolutions Communications, Inc., a Chicago, IL-based communication firm that specializes in the janitor industry.

C. diff is a spore-forming organism that causes infections and outbreaks. Normally found in health-care facilities, there are indications it is now being contracted in other settings as well, according to a November 12, 2008, issue of *Medical News Today*.

AlturaSolutions reports some of the latest figures available on C. diff:

- The number of infections in U.S. hospitals doubled from 2001 to 2005.
- Deaths involving C. diff in England and Wales rose 28 percent between 2006 and 2007.
- In 2005, 301,200 cases of C. diff/C. diff-associated disease were recorded in U.S. hospitals, resulting in approximately 28,600 deaths.
- The number of C. diff cases in nursing and other care centers may be close to 500,000 annually.

### Not New, Just Stronger

C. diff is not a new superbug; in fact, it is one that, historically, has

been treatable. The problem is that C. diff is gradually becoming resistant to certain antibiotics, requiring a variety of different, more powerful antibiotics to eradicate the organism.

C.diff transmitted through the bacteria in feces, which can survive for months on all types of surfaces—ranging from railings and counters to faucets and sanitary napkin disposal units—a common area. People become infected when they touch these surfaces and ingest the bacteria by touching their mouths or eating contaminated food.

### **More Cleaning, Less Touch**

Health-care experts say there is no question that more effective cleaning can help stop the spread of C. diff. Bleach and mechanical cleaning action are typically required to eliminate it.

Further, reducing the number of things "touched" in a restroom setting can help as well. For instance, sanitary-napkin disposal units should be replaced with foot-operated or sensor-controlled systems, to allow lids to open and close automatically without touching.

According to Dr. Alfonso Torress-Cook, an Orange County, CA, epidemiologist, who has helped the Tustin Rehabilitation Hospital, Tustin, CA, reduce its C. diff cases by nearly 90 percent, the solution is simple. "We cut C. diff infections dramatically by just cleaning more thoroughly," AlturaSolutions quoted Dr. Torress-Cook.

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