

July 13, 2011

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release

MHA ON GUARD FOR C. DIFFICILE

In recent weeks there have been several news stories about Clostridium Difficile (C-Difficile) outbreaks in Ontario hospitals. C. Difficile is a virulent bacteria commonly found throughout the community. It occurs when antibiotics kill your good bowel bacteria and allow the C. Difficile to grow. The toxins released by this bacteria usually cause episodes of diarrhea. It can become severe enough to require surgery or cause illness to the point of death.

C. Difficile is readily spread through soiled hands that have been in contact with contaminated surfaces and spread to the mouth or other surfaces. This promotes the spread of bacteria and the potential for outbreaks of the illness to occur. The incidence of C. Difficile is monitored very closely by the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and publicly reported on hospital websites. “The Middlesex Hospital Alliance (MHA) has had only a single occurrence of C. Difficile, in our two hospital sites, (Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital and Four Counties Health Services) in the first six months of 2011”, states Nancy Maltby-Webster, Chief Operating Officer, and “we are anxious to ensure our hospital environment is safe for the health of our patients.”

Many people are not aware that C. Difficile can exist in the community. People who have certain vulnerabilities and are being treated with antibiotics are an example of who can develop C. Difficile. In order to suffer the consequences of this bacteria, you don't need to be in the hospital.

At the MHA the spread of C. Difficile is controlled through a rigorous hand washing and housekeeping regimen to ensure the transmission of this infection is prevented. The public can assist greatly in limiting the spread of bacteria and outbreaks by considering the following:

- Keep in mind that ill patients in hospital are at increased risk of getting an infection.
- Visitors increase the chance of the hospital exposure to community bacteria, so visit only as absolutely required.
- Children, by nature of their energy and activity levels, can be much more likely to spread bacteria and should visit only as absolutely required.
- If coming in the hospital, be sure to use hand sanitizer before and after any visits or contact with surfaces in the hospital. In particular, watch for directions with special isolation instructions e.g. gowns or mask, for the protection of the patients and yourself.

At the Middlesex Hospital Alliance we treat C. Difficile as a serious risk to the health of our patients and staff and encourage hand washing as it is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of C. Difficile. It is important to remember that handwashing is as effective in preventing the spread of this infection inside the hospital as it is outside the hospital in your own homes – so wash your hands!

For more information on this topic see the **Clostridium Difficile – Fact Sheet** on the Health Canada website (<http://www.health.gov.on.ca>) - 30 -

Four Counties Health Services site

1824 Concession Drive
Newbury ON N0L 1Z0
519 693-4441

Strathroy Middlesex General Hospital site

395 Carrie Street
Strathroy ON N7G 3J4
519 245-1550

www.mhalliance.on.ca

*For more information
contact:*

Michael Mazza
Chief Executive Officer
519 245-5295 ext. 5592