Illness & Injury

Clostridium difficile incidence

*Clostridium difficile* is a toxin-producing bacterium that can cause symptoms ranging from diarrhea to life-threatening inflammation of the colon. *C. difficile* infections are often linked to medical care and individuals taking antibiotics. Nationally, *C. difficile* infections are the most common source of healthcare-associated infections. Population-based surveillance and mandatory reporting through the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) allow us to identify populations at higher risk of acquiring *C. difficile* infections in the state of Oregon.

In 2015, the rate of healthcare-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections was 6.5 cases per 10,000 patient days (Figure 1). Hospitals began mandatory reporting of healthcare-onset infections in 2012. The rate of *C. difficile* infections per 10,000 patient days have increased since the beginning of mandatory reporting. We saw the highest rate of healthcare-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections per 10,000 patient days in 2015 since the 2012.

![Figure 1](image)

**Reported cases of healthcare-onset C. difficile infections, Oregon, 2012–2015**

*Notes:* NHSN does not conduct surveillance for Neonatal Intensive Care Units, Labor & Delivery Units, and well-baby nurseries. These are excluded from the rate calculations.

*Source:* National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN)
Methods to control the spread of *C. difficile* in hospitals include improving hand hygiene compliance, reducing unnecessary antibiotic prescribing, training healthcare employees to correctly care for active infections, and training hospital environmental services employees how to remove *C. difficile* from hospital environments. To help fight the spread of *C. difficile*, Oregon’s inter-facility transfer communication law took effect in 2014, which requires health care facilities to notify receiving facilities of patient *C. difficile* status upon transfer.

**Additional Resources:** [Oregon NHSN HAI Report](#)

**About the Data:** Data source is the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN). Data is derived from mandatory case reporting by healthcare providers. Data includes all cases of hospital-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections.

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