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 the past year, we have seen a slight decrease in healthcare-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections. However, Oregon’s *C. difficile* infection standardized infection ratio (SIR) remains significantly higher than the 2013 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) target [Oregon SIR=0.85 (95% CI:0.79–0.90) vs. HHS target of 0.70] (Figure 1). The SIR is the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) recommended measure of performance relative to national baselines. The metric is the ratio of reported infections in a calendar year to the predicted infections for that same year based on risk-adjusted national baseline rates.

![Figure 1](image.png)

**Figure 1**: Reported cases of healthcare-onset *C. difficile* infections, Oregon, 2012–2016

Notes: NHSN does not conduct surveillance for Neonatal Intensive Care Units, Labor & Delivery Units, and well-baby nurseries. These are excluded from SIR 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 minimize risk of spread from patient-to-patient when caring for patients with 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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