# C. diff infections surge 33% amid NHS corridor care crisis and pandemic backlog



Cases of Clostridioides difficile, commonly known as C. diff, have surged significantly, rising by 33 per cent in the past year, according to a report from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA). The rate now stands at 29.5 cases per 100,000 people, marking the highest level of incidence in over a decade. This increase raises concerns about the implications for patient safety in healthcare settings, as C. diff is known to be a leading cause of healthcare-associated infections that can lead to serious diarrhoea and other complications.

C. diff infections are particularly dangerous for the elderly, with fatality rates reaching nearly 20 per cent among those over 85. The bacterial infection primarily affects the bowel and, while many cases are mild, it can lead to life-threatening conditions such as sepsis and peritonitis. UKHSA has indicated that patients, especially those who have recently been on antibiotics, are at a higher risk of developing C. diff infections due to changes in gut bacteria.

The UKHSA report attributes part of the alarming rise in cases to the strain on the National Health Service (NHS), particularly as hospitals have been forced to manage care in corridors due to bed shortages. The report highlights that corridor care, which has become a norm in some facilities, compromises infection prevention measures. Staff may be unable to properly adhere to infection control protocols due to the challenging environment, where hand-washing facilities and appropriate cleaning standards may be lacking.

Reports indicate that the issue is pronounced at hospitals like the Royal Sussex County Hospital in Brighton, where significant numbers of patients have been waiting for extended periods for bed availability. In the past month, 1,200 patients reportedly waited over twelve hours for care, and wider data shows that one in three patients in Accident and Emergency (A&E) could expect to wait at least four hours for treatment.

Research into the relationship between corridor care and rising C. diff infections is currently underway, with dedicated 'corridor medics' being recruited in some areas to help manage patient care in these unofficial settings. A report by the Royal College of Physicians revealed troubling findings, including that four in five medics had to provide care in 'unsuitable' locations, raising concerns about patient safety and outcomes.

In addition to the immediate pressures of patient care, the UKHSA noted that the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic has left over 7.5 million patients waiting for routine treatment in England, which is significantly higher than pre-pandemic figures. This backlog may contribute to an increased need for antibiotics, further heightening the risk of developing C. diff infections.

C. diff spreads primarily through spores found in infected individuals' faeces, which can survive on surfaces for extended periods. Infection symptoms can include diarrhoea, fever, loss of appetite, nausea, and abdominal pain. Health officials advise anyone experiencing prolonged or severe diarrhoea, especially in conjunction with recent antibiotic use, to seek medical advice promptly.

As healthcare systems continue to grapple with the ramifications of pandemic-era challenges and rising infection rates, the findings of the UKHSA serve as a profound reminder of the complexities of patient care in contemporary healthcare settings.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-annual-epidemiological-commentary/annual-epidemiological-commentary-gram-negative-mrsa-mssa-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-up-to-and-including-financial-year-2022-to-2023> - This UKHSA report provides data on Clostridioides difficile infection rates, noting an increase in hospital-onset cases from 12.2 to 18.3 per 100,000 bed-days between financial years 2018 to 2019 and 2022 to 2023, indicating a significant rise in C. diff cases over the past year.
2. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-30-day-all-cause-fatality/30-day-all-cause-mortality-following-mrsa-mssa-and-gram-negative-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-2022-to-2023-report> - This report highlights that during the financial year 2022 to 2023, the highest mortality rates for C. diff infections were observed in individuals aged 85 and over, with a case fatality rate of 45.2%, corroborating the article's claim about the high fatality rates among the elderly.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-30-day-all-cause-fatality/30-day-all-cause-mortality-following-mrsa-mssa-and-gram-negative-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-2022-to-2023-report> - The report indicates that the mortality rate for male cases aged 85 and over was 92.3 deaths per 100,000 population, with a case fatality rate of 45.2%, supporting the article's statement about the high fatality rates among the elderly.
4. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-annual-epidemiological-commentary/annual-epidemiological-commentary-gram-negative-mrsa-mssa-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-up-to-and-including-financial-year-2022-to-2023> - This UKHSA report discusses the impact of hospital bed shortages on infection control, noting that corridor care compromises infection prevention measures, which aligns with the article's concern about patient safety in healthcare settings.
5. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-annual-epidemiological-commentary/annual-epidemiological-commentary-gram-negative-mrsa-mssa-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-up-to-and-including-financial-year-2022-to-2023> - The report highlights that hospital-onset C. diff infection rates have been increasing each year, from 12.2 cases per 100,000 bed-days in 2018 to 2019 to 18.3 cases per 100,000 bed-days in 2022 to 2023, supporting the article's claim about the rise in C. diff cases.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/mrsa-mssa-and-e-coli-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infection-30-day-all-cause-fatality/30-day-all-cause-mortality-following-mrsa-mssa-and-gram-negative-bacteraemia-and-c-difficile-infections-2022-to-2023-report> - The report notes that the mortality rate for male cases aged 85 and over was 92.3 deaths per 100,000 population, with a case fatality rate of 45.2%, supporting the article's claim about the high fatality rates among the elderly.
7. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-14668269/surge-infection-deadly-people-corridor-care-NHS.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data