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 have become the most common source of healthcare-associated infections. Population-based surveillance and mandatory reporting through the National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN) allows us to identify populations at higher risk of acquiring *C. difficile* infections in the state of Oregon.

During 2013, 5.29 reported cases of healthcare-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections occurred per 10,000 hospitalized patients. Hospitals have been required to report healthcare-onset infections since 2012. Between 2012 and 2013, the rate for healthcare-onset, laboratory identified *C. difficile* infections has increased by 8%.

![Reported cases of healthcare-onset C. difficile infections, Oregon, 2012–2013](image)

**FIGURE 1**

**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.

Pioneer Memorial Hospital (Heppner) is not included in the rate due to data entry issue.

Source: National Healthcare Safety Network (NHSN)
Efforts to control the spread of *C. difficile* in hospitals include campaigns to improve hand hygiene compliance and to reduce unnecessary antibiotic prescribing, education for healthcare employees on appropriate care for patients with an active infection, and training for hospital environmental services employees on how to effectively remove *C. difficile* from surfaces in the hospital.

**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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