CLOSTRIDIUM DIFFICILE (C. DIFF)

Risk Factors

*C. diff* is most common in hospitals and long-term-care clinics, like nursing homes, but it also occurs in nonhospitalized patients who have not taken antibiotics. While taking antibiotics can pave the way for *Clostridium difficile* (*C. diff*), other things can put you at risk:

- Being at least 65 years old.
- Having abdominal surgery.
- Existing problems or disease in your intestines, such as inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) or colon cancer.
- Having a weakened immune system because of chemotherapy or other drugs that suppress the immune system, or AIDS.
- Past infection with *C. diff*, especially a recent infection.
- Treatment with acid-reducing medications.

If you are healthy, you will most likely not get an infection with *C. diff*. Other organisms often found in your GI tract keep it in check by occupying the sites where *C. diff* could attach and multiply. Think of these sites as parking spaces — if another organism is already there, *C. diff* has nowhere to park. *C. diff* is occurring more often in nonhospitalized community patients, who represent about 40 percent of cases.