

# Diarrhea germ may be more widespread

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A diarrhea-causing germ that once contained in hospital patients has become widespread in the United States -- sometimes fatal, health officials said.

The bacterium, *Clostridium difficile*, has caused diarrhea, particularly in patients taking antibiotics -- the antibiotics kill other microbes that keep *C. difficile* in check, allowing it to grow and cause illness, reported The Washington Post Friday.

"We are very concerned about this," said L. Clifford McDonald of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. "It's still probably an unusual occurrence in healthy people, but we're concerned enough that we want to alert people."

Severe outbreaks have been reported worldwide, such as the outbreak among hospital patients in Quebec that may have killed more than 200 people in 2003.

The New England Journal of Medicine reported that researchers identified the strain responsible for the Quebec cases, is present throughout the United States, outside hospitals.

Such infections, however, had usually been easily treatable with other antibiotics.

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