

RE: C. difficile testing

C. difficile can cause severe, life-threatening illness. It is also a common colonizer of the gastrointestinal tract; colonizing up to one in five hospitalized patients.

Beginning July 1, 2023, Catholic Health will update its reporting of C. difficile test results in accordance with national guidelines to help clinicians better discern between cases of active C. difficile disease and asymptomatic colonization. The updated reporting will reflect a 2-step algorithm whereby a highly sensitive test (PCR) will be used to screen for the presence of C. difficile DNA. If C. difficile DNA is detected, a more specific toxin assay will be performed to assess for evidence of C. difficile toxin, the cause of active C. difficile disease.

The following table may be used as a guide for interpreting C. difficile tests at Catholic Health starting July 1, 2023.

C. difficile Result	Interpretation
C. Difficile DNA: Not detected	No evidence of disease or colonization
<u>C. Difficile DNA: Detected</u> <u>C. Difficile Toxin: Negative</u>	Colonization versus Infection. <u>Treatment is only advised if there is suspicion for active infection based on clinical presentation.</u> <i>These findings may reflect colonization or active infection with low levels of toxin that were not detected on the toxin assay. Clinical correlation with patient exam, symptoms, studies, and history is advised regarding decision to treat. Repeat testing should not be performed. Hospitalized patients with C. difficile DNA detected during their stay require contact isolation per infection control policy, regardless of treatment decision.</i>
<u>C. Difficile DNA: Detected</u> <u>C. Difficile Toxin: Positive</u>	Active Infection. <u>Treatment recommended.</u> <i>These findings are consistent with active C. difficile infection. Repeat testing should not be performed. Hospitalized patients with C. difficile positive results during their stay require contact isolation per infection control policy.</i>