

Patient information

Probiotics to prevent *Clostridium difficile* (*C.diff*) infection

Information for inpatients

This leaflet contains important information about the medicine you have been prescribed.

A healthcare professional will go through the information in this leaflet with you and answer any questions you may have.



What are probiotics?

Probiotics are food ingredients found in products such as fermented milk drinks or yoghurts that contain “good” bacteria that reach the gut alive in sufficient amounts to benefit the body and maintain a healthy digestive system.

You have been prescribed a probiotic capsule to reduce your risk of developing a bowel infection called *Clostridium difficile* (otherwise known as *C.diff*). *C.diff* is an infection which can occur after you have received antibiotics for another infection which then disrupts the normal (“good”) bacteria in your gut. This then allows the problem *C.diff* bacteria to grow in your gut where it can lead to diarrhoea, which in some cases can be very severe.

The probiotic capsule contains a mixture of several “good” bacteria which are intended to stop the *C.diff* from causing a problem whilst you are taking the antibiotics. Probiotics are used in many NHS trusts across the country to reduce the *C.diff* risk.

Why have I been recommended probiotics?

We know that certain people are at more risk from *C. diff* infection than others and therefore these are the people who will be given the probiotic at the same time that they are prescribed antibiotics. This includes people who are:

- Patients staying in hospital and are aged 65 years and over, who are receiving certain antibiotics
- **OR** patients staying in hospital aged 18 years and over AND have one of the following risk factors:
 - Past *C. diff* infection
 - People prescribed proton pump inhibitors (stomach acid suppressing medications eg omeprazole, lansoprazole)

At West Suffolk Hospital we recommend either ProTectis® tablets or drops.

How to take Protectis® as an inpatient

The probiotic capsule is taken just once a day, with or before a meal. The capsule contents can be mixed with other food / fluid if you are unable to swallow tablets or have a feeding tube in place.

Are there any side effects?

There is no specific data on side effects caused by probiotics. Some evidence suggests that you may possibly experience abdominal cramping, nausea, fever, soft stools, flatulence and taste disturbance. However, these are also common effects of antibiotics and there is evidence that these symptoms are actually less likely in people taking a probiotic with their antibiotics, compared to those on antibiotics without taking a probiotic.

How long will I need to take probiotics?

If your healthcare professional has recommended having probiotics, this should be taken for the full course of antibiotics and 7 days after completing them.

As an inpatient I received the probiotic ProTectis®, why have I not been given this on discharge?

Due to the limited resources available within the NHS we are not able to provide this to patients on discharge to complete the intended course. However probiotic supplements are readily available to purchase from local supermarkets.

What probiotic should I purchase?

There are many suitable probiotic fermented milk drinks that are available from most supermarkets. The current literature does not recommend one over another.

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What probiotics and other ingredients are in ProTectis®

ProTectis® contains *Lactobacillus reuteri* (*L. reuteri*) which is a common strain of probiotic found normally in the intestines.

Is ProTectis® gluten and dairy free?

- **ProTectis® drops:** A barley source is used as a fermentation nutrient for the probiotic culture used in the product. However, analytical data from a certified laboratory has not revealed gluten in the drops. Labelling may vary from country to country, due to local regulation.
- **ProTectis® chewable tablets:** The probiotic culture which is used in the product, is fermented either on a skim milk or a barley based medium. Analytical data reveals lactose and gluten in the culture. However, in the finished product neither milk protein nor lactose are detectable, and the gluten level is below EU limit value for gluten free products (<20 mg/kg).

For more information please visit the following websites which discuss antibiotics and the importance of using them responsibly:

<https://patient.info/health/antibiotics-leaflet>

<http://antibioticguardian.com/>

If you have any questions regarding your antibiotics then please feel free to contact the Pharmacy department's Medicines Information Service at WSH. You will be able to discuss any concerns with a Clinical Pharmacist.

Telephone number for Medicines Information: **01284 713109**

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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