

FACT SHEET

Clostridium perfringens

Common clinical features

An intoxication which causes a sudden onset of colicky pain followed by diarrhoea. Nausea is common but vomiting and fever are usually absent. Generally a mild disease of short duration.

Incubation period

8 to 22 hours (usually 12 to 18 hours)

Where is it found?

Gastrointestinal tract of animals, soil and dust.

How is it acquired by affected individuals?

From contaminated cooked meat and poultry dishes subjected to inadequate temperature control after cooking, during cooling, and storage. It is only acquired from food and not passed from person to person.

How does the laboratory confirm the diagnosis?

Low numbers of this organism are present in normal faeces samples but high counts are present when it is causing illness. An immunoassay test can be used to detect the toxin in faeces and the organism can be grown from suspected food. Results will usually be available in 2 days. The tests will only be carried out if food poisoning with *Clostridium perfringens* is strongly suspected.

How is it treated?

Symptomatic treatment only.