Nursing Flowchart for Appropriate Clostridium difficile Infection (CDI) Testing

*Testing should be correlated with the clinical condition of the patient as test can detect C. difficile infection OR colonization*

**Is testing for C. diff warranted?**

**Does the patient have clinically significant diarrhea?** (Diarrhea is defined as >3 watery stools in 24 hrs)

- **NO**
  - **Testing is NOT recommended.**
  - Continue to monitor for signs of and symptoms of infection and document consistency of (formed, loose, liquid) of all bowel movements

- **YES**

**In the last 24 hours, has the patient recently been started on tube feeds OR received any laxatives or other medications known to cause diarrhea?**

- **NO**
  - **Contact the patient’s provider.**
  - Have the following crucial information ready:
    - Number of liquid stools in 24 hrs.
    - Relevant symptoms (i.e. abdominal pain or cramps, fever, chills, WBC)
    - History of recent antibiotic exposure
  - Obtain a stool specimen as soon as possible, IF ordered.

  **Please Note:**
  - Studies have shown that there is no characteristic odor of stool from patients with C. difficile

- **YES**

**Testing is NOT recommended.**

- Contact Provider. Request that laxatives and stool softeners be held if possible. Inform provider of meds and/or tube feeds that can cause diarrhea. Consider testing only patients with severe diarrhea and signs or symptoms of CDI.

**Stool Descriptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formed/Soft</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formed</td>
<td>Hard, individual lumps, balls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loose</td>
<td>Soft small balls with clear edges – not well defined</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liquid</td>
<td>Liquid with no solid pieces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Medications/Therapy that Can Cause Diarrhea Include:**

- Laxatives (Examples: Lactulose, bisacodyl, magnesium citrate, docusate, Go-Lytely, senna, Polyethylene glycol & sorbitol)
- Enemas
- Tube Feeds
- Other Medication Examples such as Kayexalate, Colchicine, Octreotide, Metformin and other diabetic medications, Antibiotics, Antineoplastics, Magnesium-containing Antacids

https://www.nebraskamed.com/for-providers/asp/plans