



Knowing When to Collect a Specimen for *C. difficile*

Consider the following:

1. Frequency

How often is the patient having loose stools?

Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines diarrhea as 3 or more loose stools within a 24 hour period.

2. Signs/symptoms

Does the patient have an elevated WBC? Elevated temperature? Abdominal pain? The patient does not have to have all these symptoms but often a patient with *C. difficile* is having more than just loose stools. ***Think infectious***--- *C. difficile* is an infection of the colon/intestines. Look beyond just the loose stool and perform a thorough GI assessment.

3. Medications

Is your patient taking a laxative or lactulose? Did the patient have an enema, suppository or bowel prep within the last day or so? If so, maybe these are the reason for the loose stools. Consider all options before sending a specimen.

**A stool specimen should only be sent
for *C. diff* testing if signs of infection and
meeting the CDC definition of diarrhea
OR ordered by a physician.**