**UMMC Algorithm for Evaluation of Patients with Suspected *C. difficile* infection**

**Does the patient have symptoms and signs of *C. difficile* infection?**

Diarrhea: New onset of observed diarrhea (>= 3 loose/watery bowel movements in a 24 h period) that is unusual or different for a patient

OR

Any loose/watery bowel movements or ileus (in absence of another cause) associated with unexplained fever, leukocytosis, or abdominal pain

*Note* - Loose/watery bowel movement/unformed stool would conform to the shape of the container

Does the patient have diarrhea?

Diarrhea: New onset of observed diarrhea (>= 3 loose/watery bowel movements in a 24 h period) that is unusual or different for a patient, and not caused by laxatives or bowel prep agents

OR

Any loose stools (in absence of laxative) or ileus associated with fever or leukocytosis

*Note* - Loose/watery bowel movement: if the stool were to be poured into a container, it would conform to the shape of the container

YES

**Patient does NOT need to be tested for *C. difficile*:** - Discontinue above agents. If diarrhea persists, consider *C. difficile* testing after 48 h have elapsed  
 - With rare exception, only ONE test should be ordered  
 - Repeat testing or test of cure is **NOT** recommended; test can remain positive for weeks despite a clinical response   
 - A positive test at the end of a course of therapy does not predict who will develop a recurrence or relapse

*C. difficile* detected by DNA but negative for toxin production may represent colonization. Interpret results in the context of patient’s signs and symptoms to determine if treatment is necessary; see *C. difficile test interpretation guide*

C difficile toxin detected by EIA?

Continue isolation precautions for duration of hospital stay

Discontinue enhanced contact precautions unless there is an ongoing suspicion for C. difficile or Norovirus; regular contact precautions should be maintained for significant ongoing diarrhea of other causes

*C. difficile* detected by DNA

*C. difficile* NOT detected by DNA

Order *C. difficile* test; place patient on enhanced contact precautions (*C. difficile* test order linked to isolation order in Epic)

Patient with prior negative *C. difficile* test in last 7 days?

YES

YES

Patient with prior positive *C. difficile* test in last 4 weeks (28 days)?

NO

NO

NO

Has the patient received (in the last 48 h):   
laxative, stool softeners, bowel prep, or oral contrast