

# SWAB guidelines for antimicrobial therapy of acute infectious diarrhoea

J.C. Bos<sup>1,4</sup>, C. Schultz<sup>3,5</sup>, C.M.J. Vandenbroucke-Grauls<sup>2,3</sup>, P. Speelman<sup>1</sup>, J.M. Prins<sup>1\*</sup>

Departments of <sup>1</sup>Internal Medicine/Division of Infectious Diseases, Tropical Medicine and AIDS, and <sup>2</sup>Medical Microbiology, <sup>4</sup>At present: Department of Internal Medicine/Centre for Poverty-related Communicable Diseases, Academic Medical Centre, Amsterdam, the Netherlands,

<sup>3</sup>Department of Medical Microbiology, VU University Medical Centre, Amsterdam, the Netherlands,

<sup>5</sup>At present: Oxford University Clinical Research Unit, Hospital for Tropical Diseases, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, \*corresponding author: tel.: +31 (0)20-566 91 11, fax: +31 (0)20-697 22 86, e-mail: j.m.prins@amc.uva.nl.

## ABSTRACT

The Dutch Working Party on Antibiotic Policy (SWAB: Stichting Werkgroep Antibioticabeleid) develops evidence-based guidelines for the use of antibiotics in hospitalised adults. In this article we discuss the guideline on antibiotic treatment of acute infectious diarrhoea (AID). AID can be subdivided into community-acquired diarrhoea, traveller's diarrhoea and hospital-acquired (nosocomial) diarrhoea. For the first two categories, the need for antibiotic treatment is generally restricted to individuals with severe illness, dysentery and/or a predisposition to complications. Infection with *Campylobacter* species is the most common cause of bacterial AID in the Netherlands. In human *Campylobacter* isolates in the Netherlands, but also in other parts of the world, high rates of primary fluoroquinolone resistance are prevalent. If antibiotic treatment in community-acquired AID and AID in travellers on return to the Netherlands is indicated, it is therefore advised to use oral azithromycin for three days as empirical treatment. If intravenous treatment is necessary, the combination of ciprofloxacin and erythromycin for five to seven days may be used. As soon as the identity of the causative organism is known, antimicrobial treatment should be tailored accordingly.

## KEY WORDS

Acute infectious diarrhoea, antimicrobial therapy, *Campylobacter*, guideline, resistance

## INTRODUCTION

The Dutch Working Party on Antibiotic Policy (SWAB: Stichting Werkgroep Antibioticabeleid) initiates and coordinates activities aimed at optimisation of antibiotic policy in the Netherlands. Through the development of evidence-based guidelines for the use of antibiotics in hospitalised adults, it offers local antibiotic and formulary committees a tool for the development of their own local antibiotic policies.

We present here the SWAB guideline for acute infectious diarrhoea. Apart from meta-analyses and guidelines collected via the Cochrane Library ([www.update-software.com/ebmg](http://www.update-software.com/ebmg)) and the National Guideline Clearinghouse ([www.guideline.gov](http://www.guideline.gov)), relevant literature from the Embase and Medline electronic databases was used. In our guideline, a degree of evidential value was assigned to each of the recommendations according to the handbook of the Dutch Institute for Healthcare Improvement (CBO) ([www.cbo.nl/product/richtlijnen/handleiding\\_ebro](http://www.cbo.nl/product/richtlijnen/handleiding_ebro)). The complete guideline is available at [www.swab.nl](http://www.swab.nl). In this report, we will mainly focus on empirical treatment strategies. The most important conclusions from the literature review with their level of evidence are summarised in *table 1*. For a schematic overview of antimicrobial recommendations for individual causative agents we refer to *table 2*.

**Table 1.** Summary of conclusions of the literature review, with level of evidence

Conclusion, reference	Level of evidence <sup>#</sup>
<i>Campylobacter</i>	
Early treatment with erythromycin for 5 days can reduce the duration of both symptoms and faecal excretion <sup>58,61</sup>	I
Early treatment with azithromycin 500 mg OD for 3 days appears to be effective as well <sup>47</sup>	3
<i>Shiga toxin-producing E. coli (STEC)</i>	
There is no favourable effect of antibiotics on symptoms of STEC-related AID <sup>24</sup>	3
A clear association between the use of antibiotics for STEC-related AID and HUS is absent <sup>25</sup>	I
STEC-related AID should not be treated with antibiotics	4
The use of antiperistaltics such as loperamide should be avoided <sup>26,27</sup>	3
<i>Toxigenic Clostridium difficile</i>	
Interruption of the offending antimicrobial is an important part of the treatment of CDAD, as it may lead to spontaneous recovery in 15-23% of cases <sup>30,31</sup>	3
Oral metronidazole (250 mg Q6h or 500 mg TD) and oral vancomycin (125 mg Q6h) for 10 days are equally effective for the treatment of CDAD <sup>28,30,63</sup>	I
Metronidazole is considered to be the treatment of choice, because it is effective and cheap and unlike vancomycin, its use is not associated with the emergence of 'vancomycin-resistant enterococci'	4
Treating silent <i>C. difficile</i> carriage is not useful <sup>64</sup>	3
<i>Recurrent toxigenic Clostridium difficile infection</i>	
A relapse is almost never the result of resistance to the initial drug, and a first relapse can be treated with the same antibiotic <sup>31</sup>	3
If relapses continue to occur after the first relapse, CDAD can be treated with a vancomycin taper or pulse regimen for 3-4 weeks <sup>35,36</sup>	3
<i>Empirical treatment of community-acquired AID</i>	
Antibiotic treatment with a fluoroquinolone has a favourable effect on duration and severity of symptoms if started within 5 days after the onset of disease <sup>42-44</sup>	I
<i>Campylobacter</i> spp. are the most frequently found causative agents of bacterial AID in the Netherlands. Resistance rates for fluoroquinolones amongst endemic <i>Campylobacter</i> strains are as high as 30.9% for <i>C. jejuni</i> and 39.2% for <i>C. coli</i> . For erythromycin, the resistance rates are 3.9 and 6.3%, respectively	NA
Azithromycin for 3-5 days is effective for the treatment of AID caused by <i>S. typhi</i> , and <i>Campylobacter</i> and <i>Shigella</i> spp. <sup>47,48,50,51,65</sup>	2
<i>Empirical treatment of AID in travellers</i>	
Antibiotics can limit the duration of symptoms <sup>52</sup>	I
A single dose of a fluoroquinolone and fluoroquinolone regimens with longer duration are equally effective <sup>53,54,57,66</sup>	I
A single dose of azithromycin (1000 mg) and a single dose of a fluoroquinolone appear to be equally effective <sup>55</sup>	3
The combination of an antibiotic and loperamide is more effective in terms of duration of symptoms than an antibiotic alone <sup>54,56,57,67,68</sup>	I
Loperamide is contraindicated in case of severe illness and dysentery	4
<sup>#</sup> Level of evidence according to the CBO manual: level 1: conclusion or recommendation is supported by at least two independent randomised studies of good quality or by a meta-analysis; level 2: supported by at least two randomised trials of moderate quality or insufficient size or another comparative study (not randomised, cohort studies, patient control studies); level 3: not supported by research of the above-mentioned levels; level 4: based on the opinion of members of the guideline committee. STEC = Shiga toxin-producing <i>E. coli</i> ; HUS = haemolytic uraemic syndrome; CDAD = <i>Clostridium difficile</i> -associated disease; NA = not applicable, OD = once daily; TD = thrice daily; Q6h = every six hours.	

## DEFINING ACUTE INFECTIOUS DIARRHOEA

In the Netherlands, about 4.5 million cases of gastroenteritis are diagnosed every year, but a general practitioner is only consulted in one out of 20 cases.<sup>1</sup> An even smaller group of patients with diarrhoea will eventually be admitted to a hospital.<sup>2</sup> Children under the age of 5 are most frequently affected, but mortality is low. A worldwide accepted definition of acute infectious inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract (acute infectious gastroenteritis) is not available and therefore the illness may be best characterised by its clinical symptoms such as diarrhoea, with or without blood and/or mucus, nausea, vomiting and fever, in combination with the detection of a viral, bacterial or parasitic pathogen. The World Health

Organisation (WHO) defines diarrhoea as the evacuation of a minimum of three loose stools in 24 hours. Diarrhoea is qualified as 'acute' when symptoms are new and have not been present for more than 14 days. Dysentery is a diarrhoeal illness that involves the evacuation of bloody stools.

This guideline is restricted to acute infectious inflammation of the gastrointestinal tract manifesting primarily as diarrhoea, a condition that will be referred to as 'acute infectious diarrhoea' (AID). Therefore, *Helicobacter pylori* infections are not included. For the same reason, acute diarrhoea caused by ingestion of microbial toxins (food poisoning) and systemic infections accompanied by diarrhoea, such as legionellosis, listeriosis, viral hepatitis and other viral infections, fall outside the scope of this guideline. AID can be subdivided into community-acquired AID, AID in travellers and hospital-acquired (nosocomial) AID.

**Table 2. Pathogen-directed therapy in acute infectious diarrhoea**

Pathogen	Antibiotic*	Comments
<b>Bacteria</b>		
<i>Campylobacter</i> spp.	1. Azithromycin, 500 mg OD orally, 3 days 2. Erythromycin, 500 mg BD iv, 5 days	No antibiotics unless high or persistent fever, dysentery or immunocompromised host
<i>Salmonella</i> spp. (non-typhi)	1. Ciprofloxacin, 500/400 mg BD orally/iv, 7 days 2. TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally/iv, 7 days	No antibiotics unless high or persistent fever or dysentery. Immunocompromised host or prosthetic material in situ: treat for 14 days Long-term carrier state possible
<i>Shigella</i> spp.	1. Ciprofloxacin, 1000 mg single dose orally 2. Azithromycin, 250 mg OD orally, 5 days (first day 500 mg) 3. TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally, 3 days	No antibiotics unless high or persistent fever or dysentery. Immunocompromised host: oral/iv ciprofloxacin 500/400 mg BD or TMP-SMZ 960 mg BD for 7-10 days
<i>Yersinia</i> spp.	1. TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally/iv, 5 days 2. Ciprofloxacin, 500 mg /400 mg BD orally /iv, 5 days	No antibiotics unless complicated infection or immunocompromised host
<i>Escherichia coli</i> spp.		
STEC O157	None	Avoid the use of antiperistaltics such as loperamide
ETEC	1. TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally, 5 days 2. Ciprofloxacin, 500/400 mg BD orally /iv, 3 days or single dose 1000 mg orally	No antibiotics unless severe illness
EPEC, EIEC, EAEC	See ETEC	Clinically indistinguishable from ETEC
<i>Vibrio cholerae</i> O1 or O139	Doxycycline, 300 mg single dose orally or TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally, 3 days or ciprofloxacin, 1000 mg single dose orally	
Toxigenic <i>Clostridium difficile</i>	1. Metronidazole, 500 mg TD orally, 10 days 2. Vancomycin, 125 mg Q6h orally, 10 days	Interrupt offending antimicrobial regimen and isolate patient
Ribotype O27	Vancomycin, 250-500 mg Q6h orally, 10 days	First relapse: repeat same treatment Multiple relapses: tapered dosing regimen with vancomycin orally: after treatment: first week 125 mg Q6h, second week 125 mg BD, third week 125 mg OD, followed by 250-500 mg twice weekly for 1-2 weeks
<b>Parasites</b>		
<i>Giardia lamblia</i>	1. Tinidazole, 2 g single dose orally 2. Metronidazole, 2 g OD orally, 3 days	Tinidazole is (temporarily?) not available in the Netherlands Silent carrier state occurs relatively frequently and does not require treatment
<i>Entamoeba histolytica</i>	Metronidazole, 750 mg TD orally, 5-10 days or tinidazole, 2 g OD orally, 3 days	
<i>Entamoeba histolytica</i> carrier state	1. Paromomycin, 500 mg TD orally, 10 days 2. Clioquinol	Paromomycin is not registered in the Netherlands Effectiveness and dose unclear
<i>Entamoeba dispar</i>	None	Apathogenic
<i>Cryptosporidium</i> spp.	None	Any antibiotic regimen is disputed. Consider antibiotic treatment if immunocompromised or HIV+ with CD4 count < 150/mm <sup>3</sup> : paromomycin 500 mg TD orally, 7 days
<i>Cyclospora</i> spp.	TMP-SMZ, 960 mg BD orally, 7 days	Immunocompromised host: TMP-SMZ 960 mg BD orally 10 days, followed by secondary prophylaxis: 960 mg OD, 3 times/week
<i>Isospora</i> spp.	None	Immunocompromised host: TMP-SMZ 960 mg BD orally 10 days, followed by secondary prophylaxis: 960 mg OD, 3 times/week
STEC = Shiga toxin-producing <i>E. coli</i> ; ETEC = Enterotoxigenic <i>Escherichia coli</i> ; EPEC = Enteropathogenic <i>E. coli</i> ; EIEC = Enteroinvasive <i>E. coli</i> ; EAEC = Enteraggagative <i>E. coli</i> ; HAART = highly active antiretroviral therapy; TMP-SMZ = trimethoprim-sulphamethoxazole (co-trimoxazole); OD = once daily; BD = twice daily; TD = thrice daily; Q6h = every six hours. *Taking into account the susceptibility of the cultured micro-organism.		

## EPIDEMIOLOGY

AID is commonly associated with a bacterial or viral infection, whereas chronic diarrhoea is more likely to be associated with parasitic disease.<sup>3</sup> In the Netherlands, approximately 300,000 people suffer from AID due to

infection with *Campylobacter* species (spp.) every year and this is the most prominent bacterial cause of AID in our country.<sup>4</sup> In contrast to children below the age of 5, adults with community-acquired AID who seek medical help from a general practitioner are more likely to suffer from bacterial (mainly *Campylobacter* spp.) or parasitic disease

(*Giardia lamblia*) than from viral disease. Noroviruses, formerly known as 'Norwalk-like' viruses, are the most common viral causative agents in adult community-acquired AID (table 3).

**Table 3. Epidemiology of acute infectious diarrhoea in Dutch general practices<sup>3</sup>**

Pathogen	Prevalence
<i>Campylobacter</i>	10.4/0.5
<i>Salmonella</i>	3.9/0.2
<i>Shigella</i>	0.1/0.0
<i>Yersinia</i>	0.7/1.1
STEC O157	0.5/0.6
Viruses	16.5/4.8
Parasites (incl. <i>G. lamblia</i> )	8.6/4.4
Percentage of patients/percentage healthy controls from all ages who tested positive for specified causative agent.	

AID is the most frequent disease in travellers outside Europe: about 10 to 60% of them develop a more or less severe form of diarrhoea. The causative agents of traveller's AID are a subset of the agents responsible for AID in local communities, as there tend to be differences in exposure and immunity between travellers and residents. Enterotoxigenic *Escherichia coli* (ETEC) is the most important pathogen in traveller's AID, although enteroaggregative *E. coli* (EAEC) is believed to play an important causative role as well. In addition, *Campylobacter* spp. are 'emerging pathogens', as they are responsible for 15 to 25% of AID cases in travellers to Asia.<sup>5,6</sup> In travellers who have returned to the Netherlands with severe AID, the distribution of causative agents is likely to be different and it is reasonable to suppose that in this situation ETEC plays a far less important role, as ETEC-related disease tends to be mild and short lived. Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC) is the most important cause of haemorrhagic colitis and of kidney failure in children worldwide.<sup>7</sup> Cattle is the main reservoir for STEC and transmission occurs through consumption/ingestion of contaminated beef, water or (raw) milk. Although an estimated 1250 cases of STEC-related AID occur in the Netherlands every year, in 2003 only 40 cases were reported and 20 cases, mainly involving children, were complicated by the haemolytic uraemic syndrome (HUS). In patients with HUS, the O157:H7 strain is the predominant serotype.<sup>8</sup> In the Western world, toxigenic *Clostridium difficile* infection is the main cause of nosocomial AID.<sup>9</sup> Hospital rooms can remain contaminated for a long period of time, as spores can survive outside the host for months. The disease is often transmitted via contaminated hands of healthcare workers. Although it is still generally accepted that a patient colonised with a toxigenic strain is not likely to develop *C. difficile*-associated disease (CDAD) until he or

she is treated with antibiotics, recent publications on severe CDAD in healthy persons thought to be at low-risk suggest that CDAD epidemiology might be changing.<sup>10-12</sup> Although clindamycin, amoxicillin and cephalosporins are most commonly implicated – partially reflecting the extensive use of some of these drugs – almost all classes of antibiotics have been associated with CDAD. If AID develops after a stay of at least three days in a hospital, it is advised to avoid/interrupt the use of antibiotics and to carry out a proper diagnostic strategy for CDAD. This should include screening of a stool specimen for *C. difficile* toxins, since testing schemes that rely solely on *C. difficile* cultures yield a significant number of false-positive results (figure 1).<sup>11</sup>

## TREATMENT OF IMPORTANT INDIVIDUAL PATHOGENS

In this section we will only discuss the most important pathogens briefly. Please refer to the complete guideline and table 2 for detailed information.

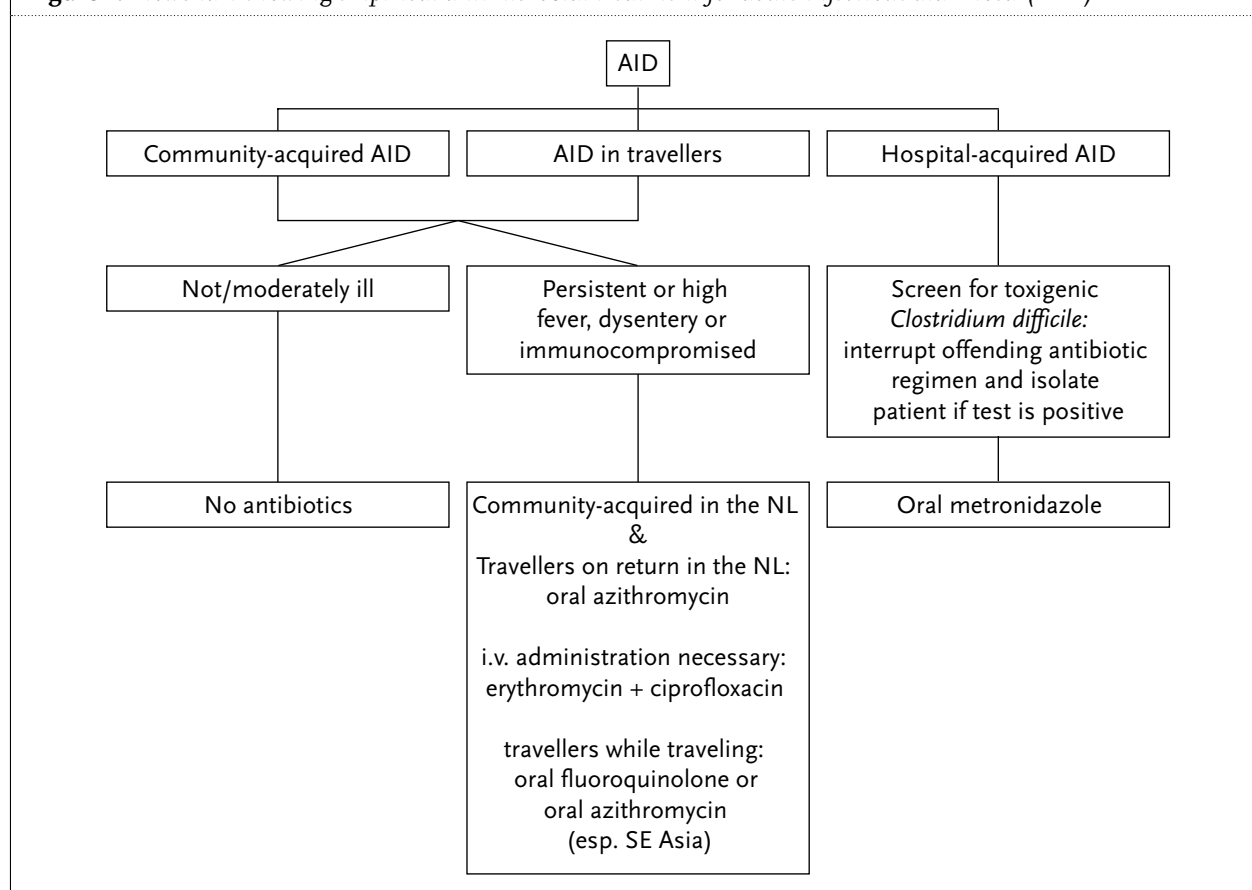
### *Campylobacter*

Infections with fluoroquinolone-resistant *Campylobacter* strains have become increasingly prevalent, coinciding with the introduction of fluoroquinolones in veterinary medicine.<sup>13</sup> Resistance data from 2002 and 2003, based on data from 16 regional laboratories in the Netherlands, reported high fluoroquinolone resistance rates amongst endemic *Campylobacter* isolates, ranging from 30.9% for *C. jejuni* to 39.2% for *C. coli*. For erythromycin, the resistance prevalence was 3.9 and 6.3%, respectively.<sup>14</sup> Analogous to the Dutch situation, many countries across Europe and the Americas, but especially in Southeast Asia, struggle with increasing fluoroquinolone resistance among *Campylobacter* spp, although regional differences are common. In a recent Thai study, a prevalence as high as 50 to 85% was found.<sup>15</sup> In this part of the world, not only *Campylobacter*, but also the other common causative agents of dysentery, such as *Shigella* spp. and nontyphoidal *Salmonella*, are becoming increasingly resistant to most agents commonly in use. The same study shows evidence of the emergence, although limited (6%), of combined resistance to fluoroquinolones and azithromycin among *Salmonella* and *Campylobacter* spp. Fluoroquinolone resistance rates of *Campylobacter* spp. isolated from travellers returning to the Netherlands are as high as 52.5% for *C. jejuni* and 59.1% for *C. coli*. The corresponding prevalence of erythromycin resistance is 2.7 and 10.5%, respectively.<sup>14</sup>

### *Salmonella*

AID caused by nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp., the second most frequently found bacterial pathogens in the Netherlands, is usually mild, although more severe

**Figure 1.** Flowchart showing empirical antimicrobial treatment for acute infectious diarrhoea (AID)



systemic illness with metastatic infection may occur, especially in the elderly and immunocompromised.<sup>16,17</sup> Antibiotic treatment is not recommended, as the use of antibiotics has not proven to be effective in uncomplicated disease and may even have a negative effect on relapse risk and carrier state.<sup>18-20</sup> It is, however, recommended to start antibiotic treatment in case of severe illness or when the patient is immunocompromised, although scientific evidence is lacking. In this case, it is advised to use a potent bactericidal drug with intracellular activity, such as ciprofloxacin.<sup>21</sup> In 2003, fluoroquinolone resistance in human *Salmonella* spp. isolates in the Netherlands was reported to be almost nonexistent, although the prevalence of multiresistance against amoxicillin, doxycycline, TMP (-SMZ) and chloramphenicol was as high as 45%, depending on the serotype.<sup>22,23</sup>

### Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli*

In Shiga toxin-producing *E. coli* (STEC)-related AID, antimicrobial therapy does not seem to affect the duration of diarrhoeal disease.<sup>24</sup> There are data that suggest a relationship between the use of antibiotics and HUS. In a prospective study in 2000, investigators found evidence for an increased risk for HUS when using antibiotics for STEC-related AID, but this conclusion could not be

confirmed in a meta-analysis.<sup>25</sup> It is nevertheless advised to treat STEC-related AID strictly symptomatically. The use of loperamide should be avoided, as it may increase the risk of systemic disease.<sup>26,27</sup>

### Toxigenic *C. difficile* and CDAD

The use of antibiotics is clearly associated with CDAD and discontinuation of the offending regimen may lead to recovery in 15 to 23% of cases. Antibiotic treatment is indicated for individuals with longstanding symptoms and for patients with an underlying disease. Hospitalised patients should be treated irrespective of the severity of the disease to prevent transmission. Oral metronidazole is considered to be the regimen of choice because it is effective, cheap and it does not carry a risk of colonisation and infection with vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE).<sup>28,29</sup> Oral vancomycin is regarded as equally effective, although some authors suggest that treatment with metronidazole may be more likely to fail.<sup>30-32</sup> A recent outbreak of a virulent strain of *C. difficile*, ribotype 027, in the Netherlands has led to controversy about the preferred first-line treatment.<sup>33</sup> When taken orally for diarrhoea, metronidazole reaches bactericidal concentrations in faeces as a result of decreased absorption and active secretion by the infected intestinal epithelium. Consequently, the luminal concentration may

decrease to an undetectable level when the diarrhoea resolves.<sup>34</sup> Although bactericidal faecal levels can be reached when metronidazole is given intravenously, the efficacy of the drug has only been established for oral administration.

### Recurrent toxigenic *C. difficile* infection

Relapses of CDAD are common, occurring in 20 to 30% of patients initially treated successfully. Once a first relapse has occurred, the chance of getting multiple relapses increases to 45 to 65%.<sup>29,35</sup> Recurrent CDAD is hardly ever attributable to drug resistance and a first relapse can therefore be successfully treated with renewed administration of the same drug.<sup>31</sup> There is some evidence that multiple relapses are best treated with vancomycin in a 'tapered or pulsed dosing regimen': in a prospective study in 2002 including 163 patients with relapsing CDAD, tapered and pulsed dosing regimens with vancomycin and metronidazole were compared.<sup>36</sup> Patients treated with vancomycin had a better outcome compared with those treated with metronidazole, but the study was neither randomised nor controlled. The use of tapered or pulsed regimens is based on the idea that after discontinuation of therapy, spores may develop into vegetative stages, which can be killed by renewed exposure to vancomycin. Starting from the second relapse, we recommend a tapered dosing regimen with vancomycin for 19 to 25 days (tables 1 and 2).

*Saccharomyces boulardii*, a non-pathogenic yeast that can be isolated from lychees, has also been used for the treatment of (recurrent) CDAD. Animal studies have shown that prophylactic administration of *S. boulardii* can have a protective effect on the development of CDAD. In addition, the outcome of two prospective human trials supports the idea that adding *S. boulardii* to a standard antibiotic regimen can prevent recurrent CDAD, although the beneficial effect in the first study was limited to the subgroup of patients using the highest dose of vancomycin and the antibiotic regimens in the second study had not been standardised.<sup>37,38</sup> Not unimportantly, a few cases of disseminated *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* infections have been described since the introduction of *S. cerevisiae* as a probiotic drug.<sup>39</sup>

An adequate immune response to *C. difficile* toxins can protect against CDAD and relapses. Even though small studies suggest that the administration of intravenous and especially oral immunoglobulins against toxin A has a therapeutic effect on relapsing CDAD, it is still too early to recommend immunoglobulins as standard treatment.<sup>40,41</sup>

## EMPIRICAL TREATMENT

### Community-acquired AID

In patients with community-acquired AID presenting in general practice or at an outpatient clinic, a favourable effect has been noted on duration and severity of symptoms when

antibiotic treatment with a fluoroquinolone is initiated within five days after the onset of the disease. The effect is independent of culture results. Most studies were performed with a five-day therapeutic regimen and therefore, at present, this should be regarded as the standard duration of therapy in the absence of appropriate diagnostic results.<sup>42-44</sup>

The favourable effect of fluoroquinolones must, however, be weighed against the aforementioned increase in *Campylobacter* resistance, which raises the concern that initial empirical treatment with ciprofloxacin is becoming increasingly inadequate. Whereas erythromycin can not be used for treating causative agents of AID other than *Campylobacter*, azithromycin can. Compared with erythromycin, the MIC<sub>90</sub> of azithromycin for intestinal pathogens is at least eight times lower.<sup>45,46</sup> In addition, a number of studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of azithromycin for the treatment of AID caused by *Shigella*, *Campylobacter* and nontyphoidal *Salmonella* spp.<sup>47,48</sup> As *Salmonella* spp. have the ability to survive in macrophages, it is of major importance that *in vitro* and animal studies have shown that azithromycin achieves high intracellular concentrations and a bactericidal response for *Salmonella* spp.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, comparative human studies have shown that azithromycin is effective for the treatment of *Salmonella typhi* infections.<sup>50,51</sup> As a result of its pharmacokinetic profile this drug can be administered once daily.

Community-acquired AID in healthy adults, often of viral origin, is usually mild and short-lived, and empirical antibiotic treatment should therefore be restricted to individuals with high or long-standing fever, patients with dysentery and immunocompromised patients (figure 1). For these patient groups, we recommend a regimen of 500 mg azithromycin, once daily for three days. If intravenous treatment is necessary, a combination of ciprofloxacin and erythromycin, for five to seven days, may be used. As there is no clear evidence for a causative relationship between the use of antibiotics and HUS during STEC-related AID, there seems to be no reason to deny empirical antimicrobial treatment to an otherwise qualifying AID patient.

### Traveller's diarrhoea

Multiple studies have demonstrated that antibiotics can limit the duration of symptoms in traveller's AID and recently this was confirmed in a Cochrane systematic review.<sup>52</sup> For years, TMP-SMZ has been the drug of empirical choice, but despite its low costs, its applicability is now greatly reduced due to worldwide resistance. Since the 1980s, fluoroquinolones have offered a new opportunity in antibiotic intervention and a three- to five-day course of ciprofloxacin can lead to a significant decrease in the duration of symptoms in adults, from three to five days to less than two days. A single-dose treatment is as effective as longer treatment courses.<sup>53,54</sup> In a study that involved American travellers to Mexico with AID, a single dose of azithromycin 1000 mg appeared to be

as effective as a fluoroquinolone. Mild to moderate AID in healthy adult travellers does not require antibiotic treatment (figure 1).<sup>55</sup> Moderate AID or AID in immunodeficient travellers can be treated with fluoroquinolones, possibly in combination with loperamide. The favourable effect of this combination on duration of symptoms has proven to exceed the effect of an antibiotic alone.<sup>56,57</sup> In case of severe illness and/or dysentery, the use of loperamide is considered to be contraindicated. Depending on local epidemiology and resistance patterns, ciprofloxacin should be replaced by a single dose of azithromycin. At present, this seems to be mainly the case in Southeast Asia.

Because of the selection of pathogens mentioned earlier, patients with severe AID on return to the Netherlands should be treated according to the recommendations for community-acquired AID, with either azithromycin orally or a combination of erythromycin and ciprofloxacin intravenously.

## NOTES

The development of SWAB guidelines is supported by a grant from the Dutch Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport. An adapted version of the manuscript has been published in *Ned Tijdschr Geneesk* 2006;150:III6-22.

## REFERENCES

- De Wit MA, Koopmans MP, Kortbeek LM, et al. Sensor, a population-based cohort study on gastroenteritis in the Netherlands: Incidence and etiology. *Am J Epidemiol* 2001;154:666-74.
- De Wit MA, Kortbeek LM, Koopmans MP, et al. Comparison of gastroenteritis cases in a general practice-based study and a community-based study. *Epidemiol Infect* 2001;127:389-97.
- De Wit MA, Koopmans MP, Kortbeek LM, van Leeuwen NJ, Vinje J, van Duynhoven YT. Etiology of gastroenteritis in sentinel general practices in the Netherlands. *Clin Infect Dis* 2001;33:280-8.
- Havelaar AH, de Wit MAS, van Koningsveld R, van Kempen E. Health burden in the Netherlands due to infection with thermophilic *Campylobacter* spp. *Epidemiol Infect* 2000;125:505-22.
- Black RE. Epidemiology of traveler's diarrhea and relative importance of various pathogens. *Rev Infect Dis* 1990;12(suppl 1):S73-9.
- Sanders JW, Isenbarger DW, Walz SE, et al. An observational clinic-based study of diarrheal illness in deployed United States military personnel in Thailand: presentation and outcome of *Campylobacter* infection. *Am J Trop Med Hyg* 2002;67:533-8.
- Heuvelink AE, Te Loo DM, Monnens LA. Het hemolytisch uremisch syndroom bij kinderen. *Ned Tijdschr Geneesk* 2001;145:620-5.
- Havelaar AH, Van Duynhoven YT, Nauta MJ, et al. Disease burden in The Netherlands due to infections with Shiga toxin-producing *Escherichia coli* O157. *Epidemiol Infect* 2004;132:467-84.
- Barbut F, Corthier G, Charpak Y, et al. Prevalence and pathogenicity of *Clostridium difficile* in hospitalized patients. *Arch Intern Med* 1996;156:1499-54.
- Johnson S, Gerding DN. *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea. *Clin Infect Dis* 1998;26:1027-34.
- Johnson S, Clabots CR, Linn FV, Olson MM, Peterson LR, Gerding DN. Nosocomial *Clostridium difficile* colonisation and disease. *Lancet* 1990;336:97-100.
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Severe *Clostridium difficile*-associated disease in populations previously at low risk – four states, 2005. *MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep* 2005;54:1201-5.
- Havelaar HA (red). *Campylobacteriose in Nederland*. Risico's en interventiemogelijkheden. RIVM 2002; rapport 250911001.
- Van Pelt W, Wannet WJB, van de Giessen AW, Mevius DJ, van Duynhoven YTHP. Trends in gastroenteritis van 1996-2003. *Infectieziektenbulletin* 2004;15:335-41.
- Isenbarger DW, Hoge CW, Srijan A, et al. Comparative antibiotic resistance of diarrheal pathogens from Vietnam and Thailand, 1996-1999. *Emerg Infect Dis* 2002;8:175-80.
- Sirivanin S, Garner P. Antibiotics for treating salmonella gut infections (Cochrane review). In: The Cochrane Library, Issue 4, 2004. Chichester, UK. John Wiley & Sons Ltd.
- Sperber SJ, Schleupner CJ. Salmonellosis during infection with human immunodeficiency virus. *Rev Infect Dis* 1987;9:925-34.
- Neill MA, Opal SM, Heelan J, et al. Failure of ciprofloxacin to eradicate convalescent fecal excretion after acute salmonellosis: experience during an outbreak in health care workers. *Ann Intern Med* 1991;114:195-9.
- Nelson JD, Kusmiesz H, Jackson LH, Woodman E. Treatment of *Salmonella* gastroenteritis with ampicillin, amoxicillin or placebo. *Pediatrics* 1980;65:1125-30.
- Chiu CH, Lin TY, Ou JT. A clinical trial comparing oral azithromycin, cefixime and no antibiotics in the treatment of acute uncomplicated *Salmonella* enteritis in children. *J Paediatr Child Health* 1999;35:372-4.
- Easmon CSF, Crane JP, Blowers A. Effect of ciprofloxacin on intracellular organisms: In-vitro and in-vivo studies. *J Antimicrob Chemother* 1986;18:43-8.
- Van Duinkerken E, Wannet WJB, Houwers DJ, van Pelt W. Antimicrobial susceptibilities of *Salmonella* strains isolated from humans, cattle, pigs and chickens in the Netherlands from 1984-2001. *J Clin Microbiol* 2003;41:3574-8.
- MARAN 2003 – Monitoring of antimicrobial resistance and antibiotic usage in animals in the Netherlands in 2003. CIDC Lelystad, 2003.
- Proulx F, Turgeon JP, Delage G, Lafleur L, Chicoine L. Randomized, controlled trial of antibiotic therapy for *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 enteritis. *J Pediatr* 1992;121:299-303.
- Safdar N, Said A, Gangnon RE, Maki DG. Risk of hemolytic uremic syndrome in children during antibiotic treatment of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 enteritis: a meta-analysis. *JAMA* 2002;288:996-1001.
- Bell BP, Griffin PM, Lozano P, Christie DL, Kobayashi JM, Tarr PI. Predictors of hemolytic uremic syndrome in children during a large outbreak of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 infections. *Pediatrics* 1997;100: E12.
- Cimolai N, Basalyga S, Mah DG, Morrison BJ, Carter JE. A continuing assessment of risk factors for the development of *Escherichia coli* O157:H7-associated hemolytic uremic syndrome. *Clin Nephrol* 1994;42:85-9.
- Bricker E, Garg R, Nelson R, Loza A, Novak T, Hansen J. Antibiotic treatment for *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea in adults. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2005, Issue 1. Art no: CD004610. DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD004610.pub2.
- Bartlett JG. Clinical Practice. Antibiotic-associated diarrhea. *N Engl J Med* 2002;346:334-9.
- Teasley DG, Gerding DN, Olson MM, et al. Prospective randomized trial of metronidazole versus vancomycin for *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea and colitis. *Lancet* 1983;2:1043-6.
- Olson MM, Shanholzer CJ, Lee JT Jr, Gerding DN. Ten years of prospective *Clostridium difficile*-associated disease surveillance and treatment at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, 1982-1991. *Infect Control Hosp Epidemiol* 1994;15:371-81.
- Musher DM, Aslam S, Logan N, et al. Relatively poor outcome after treatment of *Clostridium difficile* colitis with metronidazole. *Clin Infect Dis* 2005;40:1586-90.

33. Krausz S, Bessems M, Boermeester MA, Kuijper EJ, Visser CE, Speelman P. Levensbedreigende infecties met een nieuwe variant van *Clostridium difficile*. Ned Tijdschr Geneesk 2005;149:2081-6.
34. Bolton RP, Culshaw MA. Faecal metronidazole concentrations during oral and intravenous therapy for antibiotic associated colitis due to *Clostridium difficile*. Gut 1986;27:1169-72.
35. Mylonakis E, Ryan ET, Calderwood SB. *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea. A review. Arch Intern Med 2001;161:525-33.
36. McFarland LV, Elmer GW, Surawicz CM. Breaking the cycle: Treatment strategies for 163 cases of recurrent *Clostridium difficile* disease. Am J Gastroenterol 2002; 97:1769-75.
37. Surawicz CM, McFarland LV, Greenberg RN, et al. The search for a better treatment for recurrent *Clostridium difficile* disease: use of high-dose vancomycin combined with *Saccharomyces boulardii*. Clin Infect Dis 2000;31:1012-7.
38. McFarland LV, Surawicz CM, Greenberg, et al. A randomized placebo-controlled trial of *Saccharomyces boulardii* in combination with standard antibiotics for *Clostridium difficile* disease. JAMA 1994;271:1913-8.
39. Munoz P, Bouza E, Cuenca Estrella M. *Saccharomyces cerevisiae* fungemia: An emerging infectious disease. Clin Infect Dis 2005;40:1625-34.
40. Wilcox MH. Descriptive study of intravenous immunoglobulin for the treatment of recurrent *Clostridium difficile* diarrhoea. J Antimicrob Chemother 2004;53:882-4.
41. Van Dissel JT, de Groot N, Hensgens CM, et al. Bovine antibody-enriched whey to aid in the prevention of a relapse of *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhoea: preclinical and preliminary clinical data. J Med Microbiol 2005;54:197-205.
42. Wiström J, Jertborn M, Ekwall E, et al. Empiric therapy of acute diarrheal disease with norfloxacin. A randomised, placebo-controlled study. Ann Intern Med 1992;117:202-8.
43. Dryden MS, Gabb RJ, Wright SK. Empirical treatment of severe acute community acquired gastroenteritis with ciprofloxacin. Clin Infect Dis 1996;22:1019-25.
44. Goodman LJ, Trenholme GM, Kaplan RL, et al. Empiric antimicrobial therapy of domestically acquired acute diarrhea in urban adults. Arch Intern Med 1990;150:541-6.
45. Gordillo ME, Singh KV, Murray BE. In vitro activity of azithromycin against bacterial enteric pathogens. Antimicrob Agents Chemother 1993;37:1203-5.
46. Jones K, Felmingham D, Ridgway G. In vitro activity of azithromycin (CP-62, 993), a novel macrolide against enteric pathogens. Drugs Exp Clin Res 1988;14:613-5.
47. Kuschner RA, Trofa AF, Thomas RJ, et al. Use of azithromycin for the treatment of *Campylobacter* enteritis in Thailand, an area where ciprofloxacin resistance is prevalent. Clin Infect Dis 1995;21:536-41.
48. Khan WA, Seas C, Dhar U, Salam MA, Bennish ML. Treatment of shigellosis: V. Comparison of azithromycin and ciprofloxacin. A double-blind, randomised, controlled trial. Ann Intern Med 1997;126:697-703.
49. Chiu CH, Lin TY, Ou JT. In vitro evaluation of intracellular activity of antibiotics against non-typhoid *Salmonella*. Int J Antimicrob Agents 1999;12:47-52.
50. Girgis NI, Butler T, Frenck RW, et al. Azithromycin versus ciprofloxacin for treatment of uncomplicated typhoid fever in a randomized trial in Egypt that included patients with multidrug resistance. Antimicrob Agents Chemother 1999;43:1441-4.
51. Chinh NT, Parry CM, Ly NT, et al. A randomized controlled comparison of azithromycin and ofloxacin for treatment of multidrug-resistant or nalidixic acid-resistant enteric fever. Antimicrob Agents Chemother 2000;44:1855-9.
52. De Bruyn G, Hahn S, Borwick A. Antibiotic treatment for traveller's diarrhoea. The Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews 2000, Issue 3. DOI: 10.1002/14651858. CD002242.
53. Salam I, Katelaris P, Leigh-Smith S, Farthing MJ. Randomised trial of single-dose ciprofloxacin for travellers' diarrhoea. Lancet 1994;344:1537-9.
54. Petruccioli BP, Murphy GS, Sanchez JL, et al. Treatment of traveler's diarrhea with ciprofloxacin and loperamide. J Infect Dis 1992;165:557-60.
55. Adachi JA, Ericsson CD, Jiang ZD, et al. Azithromycin found to be comparable to levofloxacin for the treatment of US travelers with acute diarrhea acquired in Mexico. Clin Infect Dis 2003;37:1165-71.
56. Taylor DN, Sanchez JL, Candler W, Thornton S, McQueen C, Echeverria P. Treatment of travellers' diarrhea: ciprofloxacin plus loperamide compared with ciprofloxacin alone: a placebo-controlled, randomized trial. Ann Intern Med 1991;114:731-4.
57. Ericsson CD, DuPont HL, Mathewson JJ. Single dose ofloxacin plus loperamide compared with single dose or three days of ofloxacin in the treatment of traveler's diarrhea. J Travel Med 1997;4:3-7.
58. Mandal BK, Ellis ME, Dunbar EM, Whale K. Double-blind placebo controlled trial of erythromycin in the treatment of clinical *Campylobacter* infection. J Antimicrob Chemother 1984;13:619-23.
59. Salazar-Lindo E, Sack RB, Chea-Woo E, et al. Early treatment with erythromycin of *Campylobacter jejuni*-associated dysentery in children. J Pediatr 1986;109:355-60.
60. Anders BJ, Lauer BA, Paisley JW, Reller LB. Early treatment with erythromycin for treatment of *Campylobacter* enteritis. Lancet 1982;1:131-2.
61. Pai CH, Gillis F, Marks MI. Erythromycin in treatment of *Campylobacter* enteritis in children. Am J Dis Child 1983;137:286-8.
62. Waterspiel JN, Ashkenazi S, Morrow AL, Cleavy TG. Effect of subinhibitory concentrations of antibiotics on extracellular Shiga-like toxin I. Infection 1992;20:25-9.
63. Wenisch C, Parschalk B, Hasenündl M, Hirschl AM, Graninger W. Comparison of vancomycin, teicoplanin, metronidazol and fusidic acid for the treatment of *Clostridium difficile*-associated diarrhea. Clin Infect Dis 1996;22:813-8.
64. Johnson S, Homann SR, Bettin KM, et al. Treatment of asymptomatic *Clostridium difficile* carriers (fecal excretors) with vancomycin or metronidazole. A randomized, placebo-controlled trial. Ann Intern Med 1992;117:297-302.
65. Shanks GD, Smoak BL, Aleman GM, et al. Single dose of azithromycin or three-day course of ciprofloxacin as therapy for epidemic dysentery in Kenya. Clin Infect Dis 1999;29:942-3.
66. Ericsson CD, DuPont HL, Mathewson JJ. Optimal dosing of ofloxacin with loperamide in the treatment of non-dysenteric traveler's diarrhea. J Travel Med 2001;8:207-9.
67. Ericsson CD, DuPont HL, Mathewson JJ, West MS, Johnson PC, Bitsura JA. Treatment of traveler's diarrhea with sulfamethoxazole and trimethoprim and loperamide. JAMA 1990;263:257-61.
68. Murphy GS, Bodhidatta L, Echeverria P, et al. Ciprofloxacin and loperamide in the treatment of bacillary disease. Ann Intern Med 1993;118:582-6.