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**BUG LINKED TO BOWEL DISEASE** **DEATHS**  
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A common hospital bug increases the risk of death for patients with inflammatory bowel disease (IBD) six-fold, research has shown.

Scientists called for all IBD patients to be screened on admission to hospital to protect them against Clostridium difficile (C diff).

IBD, which includes Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, affects about 240,000 people in the UK.

The autoimmune conditions cause symptoms of abdominal pain and diarrhoea, which can be severe enough to warrant admission to hospital.

Researchers in London looked at NHS admission records from 2002 to 2008 and found a strong link between IBD, C diff, and death in hospital.

IBD patients infected with C diff were six times more likely to die than those who escaped the bug. After 30 days, their mortality rate was as high as 25%.

The findings, reported in the journal Alimentary Pharmacology and Therapeutics, also showed that IBD patients with C diff had longer stays in hospital and were almost twice as likely to need gastrointestinal surgery.

Typically they remained in hospital for 26 days, compared with five days for patients without C diff.

Dr Sonia Saxena, one of the researchers from the School of Public Health at Imperial College London, said: ``Hospitals must do everything they can to control infections such as C difficile.

We are asking for these high-risk patients to be screened for C difficile proactively on admission to hospital so that if they are exposed, they can be diagnosed and treated more quickly.''

Co-author Dr Richard Pollok, from St George's Healthcare NHS Trust, said: ``At St George's Hospital, we have seen a 70% reduction in hospital-acquired infections after implementing a range of control measures, such as careful handwashing and reduced use of broad spectrum antibiotics.

But we need to do more to protect vulnerable patients such as those with IBD.''