

Rise of Deadly Superbug Clostridium Difficile Fueled by Sugar in Chewing Gum and Packaged Foods

A common additive found in packaged foods, baked goods and jam might have helped spur the rise of two deadly strains of bacteria. Known as Clostridium difficile, or C. difficile, the bacteria has become a problem in hospitals across the world.

According to a data from the Centers of Disease Control & Prevention in 2015, nearly 500,000 people are hospitalized each year from the infection.

In the U.S., 29,000 people died within a month of contracting the infection, though only 15,000 were directly caused by the bacteria. In America and Europe, two particular strains are linked to the problem, and public health officials and researchers have been looking into why they've gained traction more recently.

"These lineages have been present in people for years without causing major outbreaks; in the 1980s they were not epidemic or hypervirulent but after the year 2000

they began to predominate and cause major outbreaks," said study co-author Dr. James Collins, a postdoctoral associate at the Baylor College of Medicine in Houston, Texas, in a statement. We wanted to know what had helped these lineages become a major health risk."