

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales

Information and advice for patients

Infection Control

What are 'Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales'?

CPE (or CRO) are a type of bacteria which have become resistant to Carbapenems, a group of powerful antibiotics. This means the bacteria can cause infections which are resistant to Carbapenem antibiotics and many other antibiotics.

Why Carbapenem resistance matters?

Doctors rely on Carbapenem antibiotics to successfully treat certain complicated infections when other antibiotics have failed. The spread of these resistant bacteria can cause problems to vulnerable patients in hospitals or other settings, because there are so few antibiotics available to treat the infections they cause.

CPE positive patient - How you can get this infection and what are the symptoms?

This bacteria can be found, living harmlessly, in the gut of humans and so it can be difficult to say when or where you picked it up. However, there is an increased chance of picking up these bacteria if you have been a patient in a hospital abroad or in the UK that has had patients carrying the bacteria, or if you have been in contact with a carrier elsewhere.

When you attend hospital

You must present this letter and or the CPE card to staff immediately so they can care for you appropriately.

How you will be cared for whilst in hospital?

You may stay in a single room with toilet facilities or in a specific ward whilst in hospital. You may be asked to provide several samples, depending on your length of stay, to check if you are infected with or carrying the bacteria. The samples might include a few swabs from certain areas, such as where the tube for your drip (if you have one) enters the skin, a rectal swab (a sample taken by inserting a swab briefly inside your bottom), and / or a stool sample.

How the spread of CPE can be prevented

Being in a single room or specific area helps to prevent spread of the bacteria. Healthcare workers will use gloves and aprons when caring for you and should wash their hands regularly. The most important measure for you to take is to wash your hands well with soap and water,

especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching medical devices (if you have any) such as your urinary catheter tube and your intravenous drip, particularly at the point where it is inserted into your body or skin. Visitors will be asked to wash their hands on entering and leaving the room and may be asked to wear an apron.

What happens when you go home?

You may still be a carrier of CPE when you go home and quite often this will go away with time. No special measures or treatment are required at home. You should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene. If you have any concerns you may wish to contact your GP for advice. Should you or a member of your household be admitted to hospital, you should let the hospital staff know that you are or have been a carrier of CPE and show them the letter/card.

How long a person can carry the bacteria?

There is no definitive answer to how long a person may carry the bacteria. The length of time could be anything from a few days to indefinitely. Treatment with certain antibiotics (for any infection) may also affect length of carriage. Effective hygiene practices and the use of standard precautions for all individuals receiving care will minimise the transmission of Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales.

Where to find more information

If you would like any further information please speak to a member of your care staff, who may also contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team for you. The UKHSA website is another source of information.

UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

Framework of actions to contain carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (September 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/actions-to-contain-carbapenemase-producing-enterobacterales-cpe>

(Website checked 25 September 2024)

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