

# Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales Screening

Information and advice for contacts being screened

## Infection Control

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### What are Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales?

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE) are a family of bacteria that usually live harmlessly in the gut. This is known as colonisation and someone who is colonised is known as a carrier. There is no way to know if you are colonised without being tested. If you are colonised with CPE, it does not usually cause any problems. However, if the bacteria move to the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause an infection, and the risk is increased for those patients with a low immune system. This can be a problem, as there are very few antibiotics available to treat an infection with CPE, making them difficult to treat.

CPE can be spread from person to person, via the hands of staff, via other patients and visitors, and by touching surfaces and equipment around the bedside that might have CPE on them. They are not spread through the air or by coughing or sneezing.

Everyone, including patients, staff and visitors can help prevent the spread of CPE by:

- Having their sleeves rolled up above their elbows.
- Washing hands with soap and water when entering and leaving wards at our hospitals.
- Helping patients wash their hands with soap and water or use hand wipes before eating meals and after going to the toilet.
- Washing hands with soap and water before and after helping a patient with their personal care.

### How do I know if I have CPE?

One of the main ways CPE is spread is when patients transfer between hospitals where CPE is present.

Therefore, we will screen (test) you for CPE when:

- You have been a patient staying at least overnight in another hospital in the UK in the last 12 months.
  - You have transferred from a hospital abroad or have been an inpatient in a hospital abroad in the last 12 months.
  - You are admitted to critical care.
  - We know already that you are colonised with CPE.
  - We know or suspect you have come into contact with someone who has had CPE.
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This is why you are asked if you have been in another hospital in the UK or abroad in the last 12 months. When you transfer into one of our hospitals from another hospital, this is also why you may be transferred into a single room to begin with while a test is taken.

If you are an inpatient at one of our hospitals, it may be necessary to take a CPE screen (test) before you are transferred to another hospital for treatment.

### **What is the CPE screen (test)?**

The test usually involves taking a sample from your rectum (the end part of your gut) where a swab (like a long cotton bud) is put just inside your bottom. This is because CPE mostly live in your bowel. We may also test a sample of your faeces (poo). We may also test any wounds or where you have had a drip or line fitted (intravenous line sites) for the presence of CPE.

### **Results of the CPE screen (test)**

We usually have the results of the CPE screen (test) within four days.

If the screening swab is negative, there will be no need to stay in a single room while in hospital. If the screening swab shows you are a carrier of CPE, but you have no signs of infection, you will remain in a single room for the duration of your stay in hospital, with your own toilet or commode. You won't need to have any additional antibiotic treatment.

If you are shown to have an infection with CPE, you will receive antibiotics under the guidance of a specialist doctor in Microbiology.

### **Do I need to tell anyone I have CPE?**

Before you leave hospital, you will be given a leaflet that says you have been colonised with CPE, or a leaflet that says you have had an infection with CPE. You can show this to your GP or when you go to another hospital.

### **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 UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) website is another source of information.

## UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)

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 20 January 2025).

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