

Infection Prevention Control

CPE (Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae)

What are ‘Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae’? (CPE)

Within the gut of every healthy human is a bacteria called Enterobacteriaceae. When this bacteria is in the gut it is harmless, helping us to digest our food. However, if the bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infection.

Enterobacteriaceae bacteria can become resistant to a powerful group of antibiotics called carbapenems. This is referred to as Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (abbreviated to CPE).

Why does carbapenem resistance matter?

Being resistant to an antibiotic can make treating infection (and any future infections) difficult. This could mean hospital stays are longer, the antibiotic medication that is able to be used become more limited, and whilst in hospital you may be isolated in a side room from other patients. This is because in a hospital or other care setting where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of these resistant bacteria can cause problems.

Why are patients screened for CPE?

By knowing which patients are carrying CPE we can make sure that they receive the best individual care, aiming to prevent CPE infection and the spread to other patients.

It is very important to know if someone is carrying CPE so that if an infection develops, medical staff can quickly identify the best antibiotic to treat it.

How are patients screened for CPE?

Individuals admitted as inpatients to University Hospitals Coventry and Warwickshire are assessed at the time of admission to decide if they are at risk of carrying CPE. You may be asked to be screened for CPE if you have been:



Patient Information

- in a hospital outside Warwickshire (including to receive holiday dialysis, a treatment received by patients in renal failure);
- in contact with someone with CPE; or
- identified as having CPE in the past.

How will I be tested for CPE?

If you need a sample to be taken for testing, a member of your care team will insert a swab into your rectum (bottom), or they may test a sample of faeces (poo).

Your privacy and dignity will be respected at all times when these samples are being taken.

All swabs and samples will be sent to the laboratory to see which bacteria grow, and your care team will tell you the results, usually within 48 hours. You may be asked to stay in a single room until the result of your test is known so we can minimise the risk of the bacteria spreading to other patients. If you go home before the result is communicated to you we will contact your GP.

Does CPE need to be treated?

If you are told you are carrying CPE you do not need to be treated. As mentioned, these bacteria can live harmlessly in the gut. However, if the bacteria has caused an infection then antibiotics will be required. Please do ask your doctor or healthcare worker to explain your situation to you in more detail.

How is CPE spread?

Carbapenemase producing bacteria can be spread from one person to another on unwashed hands, on equipment that is contaminated and not been sufficiently cleaned, or may be picked up from the environment.

In hospital there is a risk to other vulnerable patients; at home no extra precautions are required. Thorough hand washing and normal household cleaning practices are sufficient. Towels, clothes, bed sheets and other items that might have CPE on them can be washed in a domestic washing machine. No special washing temperature is recommended. All eating utensils and dishes can be washed as normal. Your family is not at risk, although if you are told you have CPE, it would be useful for your family to inform healthcare providers in the event they are admitted to hospital.

How can the spread of CPE be prevented?

The most important measure you can take is to maintain effective hand hygiene, washing your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching any medical devices (such as your urinary catheter tube or other medical tubes) if you have any, particularly at the point where it is inserted into the body or skin.

Patient Information

You should expect that visiting healthcare workers will clean their hands on arrival, before and after providing direct care, and on leaving. They will use an apron or long sleeved gown when caring for you.

Should you or a member of your household be admitted to hospital or other healthcare facility, you should let the hospital staff know that you are, or have been, a carrier.

Can I have visitors in hospital or when I am at home?

Yes. You can have visitors in hospital and at home. Visitors are advised to visit you last if they are visiting other patients in the hospital. As the CPE bacteria can be passed on through touch, you and your visitors should practice good hand hygiene, which is proven to be simple and effective.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format please contact and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy.

Document History

Author	Fiona Wells
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Contact Tel No	24791
Published	November 2017
Review	November 2019
Version	1
Reference No	HIC/LFT/2131/17