
Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

What is CPE?

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (sometimes called CPE) is the name given to a group of bacteria that have become very resistant to antibiotics including those called carbapenems. Enterobacteriaceae are a large family of bacteria that usually live harmlessly in the gut of all humans and animals without causing problems ('colonisation'). However, if they get into the wrong place such as the bladder or bloodstream they can cause infection. You may be a carrier of CPE (colonised), this means that the bacteria are present in your body but are not causing illness or infection and treatment is not generally required.

Why does carbapenem resistance matter?

Carbapenems are a valuable family of antibiotics normally reserved for serious infections. Until now, they have been the antibiotics that doctors could always rely upon when other antibiotics failed. However, infections caused by CPE can be difficult to treat with antibiotics therefore steps need to be taken to prevent the infection spreading to other people.

How did I get CPE?

There are many ways that you may have come into contact with this germ. You are more likely to develop CPE if you have been in a hospital including those abroad or being exposed to other carriers of this germ.

How can the spread of CPE be prevented?

Carrying CPE will not affect family or friends provided that everyone has good hand washing practices. Hands should always be washed with soap and water:

- before preparing or eating food
- after using the toilet
- after touching any wounds or medical devices that you may have

No special cleaning is required in the home and your clothes may be washed in the usual manner, along with the rest of the household laundry. If you live in a care home the staff looking after you may need to take additional precautions to prevent the spread of CPE. If you have concerns you should speak to the staff looking after you.

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Can I be cured of CPE?

Sometimes the body will eventually clear itself of CPE by its natural healing and cleansing action. There are some medicines available to help to treat CPE infection but there is no medicine to help remove CPE colonisation.

Who should I tell if I have CPE?

If you need care from your doctor, nurse, a hospital or other healthcare worker, please tell them that you have tested positive for CPE.

Further information

If you would like further information please contact the Infection Prevention & Control Service on **0151 604 7750**.

If you would like this information in another format, please contact the Your Experience Team on freephone 0800 694 5530. Alternatively you can email wcnt.yourexp@nhs.net

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