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| Screening for carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPOs) |
| Information for residents, family and carers |
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## What is the issue?

A type of bacteria called carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPOs) that are resistant to many commonly used antibiotic medications has been identified at this residential care facility.

This fact sheet provides information for residents, their families and carers on CPO and explains the actions being taken by the Department of Health and the facility’s management to address this issue.

## What are CPOs?

CPO are a group of bacteria (germs) that are resistant to many antibiotics, including a type of antibiotic called carbapenems. This means that many antibiotics no longer work against these bacteria, which can make infections difficult to treat.

## How do you acquire CPO?

CPO is usually spread through contact with people infected with or carrying CPO or with equipment or environmental surfaces contaminated with CPO.

It is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

## What does it mean to have CPO?

In most people CPO are harmless and do not cause infection. However, in some people, such as those whose immune system is compromised, CPO can become a serious problem. It may cause urinary tract infections (UTI), pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and wound infections.

## Is there treatment for CPO?

Infections caused by CPO bacteria can be difficult to treat and should be managed with advice from an infectious diseases specialist.

People who carry CPO bacteria without having any symptoms (called ‘colonisation’) do not require antibiotic treatment.

## Why are residents being screened for CPO?

Residents who may have been exposed to CPO are being tested to identify those who may be carrying the bacteria. This ensures that precautions can be appropriately implemented to prevent further spread.

## What does screening for CPO involve?

Screening for CPO involves collecting a sample for testing. This is usually a faecal sample. Additional samples may be collected based on the resident’s risk factors such as a urine sample if they have a urinary catheter or wound swab if they have a wound.

All samples are tested for CPO at a microbiology laboratory.

## How long will the results of the screening take?

Results usually take one to two weeks to return. Your GP will inform you of the result.

## How can I help prevent the spread of CPO?

It is important to follow good hygiene practices to help prevent the spread of any germs:

* Wash your hands with soap and water and dry them thoroughly after going to the toilet and before eating food. Also, wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub whenever you leave your room.
* Use your own toilet wherever possible.
* Use your own bedding and linen, such as towels and face cloths.
* Avoid sharing personal items with other people, such as bedding, linen and grooming items such as nail scissors, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes.
* Cover any wounds whenever possible.

Seek staff assistance to maintain good hygiene practices if required. Be sure to follow instructions and advice provided by your doctor or healthcare provider on how to care for wounds, or manage medical devices (for example, urinary catheters).

People with a CPO may launder their clothes in the usual manner and do not require separate eating utensils and dishes, which can be washed in the usual manner also.

## Want to know more?

If you have any questions, your facility’s infection prevention and control professional, the nurse in charge or your GP can help.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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