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| Carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPOs) |
| Information for residents, family and carers |
| OFFICIAL |

## What are carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPOs)?

CPOs 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.

## What is the issue?

CPOs bacteria can spread from person-to-person. People living in long-term residential care facilities are at increased risk of acquiring CPO, particularly when sharing toilets and bathrooms.

Many commonly used antibiotics do not work against CPO bacteria which can make infections caused by it difficult to treat. Therefore, it is important to prevent people from acquiring it and spreading it to others.

## How are CPOs spread?

CPO bacteria are usually spread from person-to-person through contact with people infected with or carrying the bacteria or through contact with contaminated objects (for example, shared equipment) and environmental surfaces.

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

## Will CPO make me unwell?

Most people exposed to CPO bacteria do not develop infection or illness. However, it can cause illness, such as urinary tract infections, pneumonia, bloodstream infections, and wound infections in people with a weakened immune system.

Some people may also carry CPO bacteria without showing any symptoms. This is called ‘colonisation’.

## What is the 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 do not require antibiotic treatment.

## What will it mean for me if I have a CPO?

If you have a CPO, there may be changes to the way you receive care. This is to prevent the bacteria from spreading to others. Staff may wear a gown and gloves when they provide you with close personal care, such as showering or toileting.

You will still be able to join in group activities and eat your meals in the dining area.

If you are admitted to hospital, it is very important that you let them know that you carry a CPO so that they can put appropriate precautions in place.

## 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.

## Are my visitors at risk of getting CPO?

Healthy people usually do not acquire CPO. Visitors can continue to visit you and do not need to wear gowns or gloves when visiting unless they will be participating in close personal care such as showering or toileting.

It is important that your visitors wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before and after visiting you.

## 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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