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| Carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae* (CPE) |
| Information for patients and their visitors |

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## What is CPE?

***Enterobacteriaceae***  is the name given to a family of bacteria or germs that normally live in our bowel. A well-known *Enterobacteriaceae* you may have heard of is *Escherichia coli* or *E. coli*.

**Carbapenems** are a group of antibiotics (for example, meropenem) that usually work against these bacteria. Some bacteria have become hard to treat because these antibiotics no longer work – the bacteria have become resistant to the antibiotics. These bacteria are called **carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae*** (CPE).

## How do you get CPE?

In Australia, CPE infections are rare. When people do get an infection with CPE, it has often been picked up when the person has had medical care overseas. CPE is found in patients in hospitals and clinics around the world, but particularly in Greece, India and South-East Asia.

People who carry CPE are at risk of getting a CPE infection if they have an operation (especially on the prostate) or need treatment involving ventilators (breathing machines), catheters or intravenous drips. People who have taken some antibiotics for long periods of time are also at risk of becoming colonised or infected with CPE.

## Will CPE make me unwell?

In most people CPE are harmless and do not cause infection. However in some people, such as those whose immune system is weak or compromised, CPE can become a serious problem. It may cause urinary tract infections (UTI), pneumonia, bladder or kidney infections, bloodstream infections, and many other types of infections.

Although healthy people do not usually get CPE infections, it is important to know that people may carry CPE in their bowel or a wound without symptoms. This is called colonisation.

## Is there treatment for CPE?

Infections caused by CPE can be very difficult to treat. There are not many options for treating CPE infections as the bacteria are usually resistant to most antibiotics. While it is always better that people try to prevent the infection in the first place, any infections caused by CPE will be appropriately managed with advice from an Infectious Diseases specialist.

## How is CPE spread?

CPE is usually spread person to person through contact with someone who is infected or colonised. CPE may also be spread via equipment that has been shared between residents and has not been adequately cleaned and disinfected between uses; or through contamination of the environment.

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

## What happens if I have CPE?

If CPE is found in a specimen taken from you, your healthcare team will continue to provide the same level of care. However, the following extra precautions will be taken while you are in hospital to prevent the spread of CPE.

* You will be moved to a single room and a sign will be placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions, e.g.to wear a gown and gloves.
* Everyone, including your visitors and you, will need to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub before entering or leaving your room.
  + An alert will be placed in your hospital record to alert staff if you are admitted another time that extra precautions are required.

If you go to another healthcare facility, healthcare provider (e.g. doctor or physiotherapist)or have home care services, you need to tell them that you have CPE. You do not need to inform other community-based facilities or businesses that are not healthcare-related (e.g. public swimming pool).

## If I have CPE, can I have visitors?

Your family and friends can visit you; however, to prevent the spread of CPE to other patients or the environment, it is important that all your visitors do the following.

* Always perform hand hygiene before entering and leaving your room.
* Do not eat or drink in your room.
  + Do not use your hospital bathroom.

## What will happen when I go home?

There is no need to take special precautions at home, but it is important that you and your family remember to follow these good general hygiene practices.

* Always wash your hands with soap and water
  + - After going to the toilet
    - Before preparing and eating food
    - Before and after touching any wounds or medical devices that you may have
* Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
  + Cover any skin wounds whenever possible.

No special cleaning is required in your home and your clothing may be laundered in the usual manner, along with the rest of the household laundry. All eating utensils and dishes can be washed the way you normally do.

## Will I be able to get rid of CPE?

Your body may clear CPE from the bowel as you recover, but this is not always the case. Taking antibiotics can encourage CPE to grow in the bowel again, so they should only be taken for a very good reason. Antibiotics are available to treat CPE infection but they will not clear CPE from the bowel.

## Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions, the hospital’s infection control professional or the doctor or nurse looking after you or your family 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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