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| Screening for carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae* (CPE) |
| Information for residents, family and carers |

## What is the issue?

Recently, residents in this residential care facility have been identified as carrying bacteria called carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae* (CPE). The information in this sheet has been prepared for residents, their families and carers. It explains the steps taken by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services and the facility management to manage this issue and protect the health of residents.

## What is CPE?

***Enterobacteriaceae*** is the name given to a family of bacteria that normally lives 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.

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

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.

## What does it mean to have CPE?

In most people CPE are harmless and do not cause infection. However in some people, such as those whose immune system is 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.

## Treatment against 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.

## Why are residents being screened for CPE?

In order to help with planning for future care and in line with both the Department’s and your facility’s infection control measures, residents are being screened for CPE as a precaution.

## What does screening for CPE involve?

Screening for CPE involves a staff member collecting a small sample of your faeces. This will be sent to a microbiology laboratory where it will be tested for CPE.

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

Results may take two to three weeks to finalise. Your GP will inform you of the result.

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

Regardless of whether or not you have CPE, it is important that you follow the precautions listed below. Staff may need to assist you in being able to carry them out.

* Wash your hands with soap and water and dry them thoroughly after going to the toilet and before eating food. You should also wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub whenever you leave your room.
* Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
* Avoid sharing grooming items such as nail scissors, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes.
* Cover any skin wounds whenever possible.
	+ Make sure you 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).

## Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions, your facility’s manager can provide you with further information regarding your care or the care of your family member.

Adapted from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care [*Information for patients and their visitors: Carbapenem Resistant Enterbacteriaceae (CRE)*](http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications/cre-patient-information-sheet/) (2013) <http://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications/cre-patient-information-sheet/>.

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