

What is Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)?

Advice for patients and families

CPE is a type of bacteria which, although often harmless and symptomless, can cause infection on some occasions. Follow our guidance here, and contact our team if you have any questions.

What is Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE), and why does it matter?

Antibiotics are an important type of drug used to help treat bacterial infections.

There are however some types of bacteria which are resistant to antibiotics. One of these is called Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae, sometimes known as CPE.

In hospitals, where there are many vulnerable patients, the spread of bacteria which are resistant to antibiotics can cause problems.

Our bodies all have different types of bacteria in them, such as Enterobacteriaceae, which usually live harmlessly in our guts. This is often referred to as colonisation.

However, when bacteria get into the wrong places, such as your bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infections. If the bacteria produces an enzyme (chemical) known as Carbapenemase for example, it can mean the bacteria becomes very resistant to stronger types of antibiotics – making typical treatment and recovery with antibiotics very difficult.

Does CPE need to be treated?

If you're a carrier of CPE, there is no need to be treated immediately. Treatment is only needed if the bacteria are causing an infection, in which case you'll be given antibiotics.

How did I pick up CPE?

Sometimes CPE can be found living harmlessly in your gut, so it can be difficult to say when or where you picked it up. However, there's an increased chance of carrying CPE if you have:

- Been a patient in a hospital abroad
- Been a patient in a UK hospital that has had patients carrying CPE, or
- Had direct physical contact with a carrier of CPE

It may be necessary to take further tests to check if you are still carrying the bacteria. This can be done by taking samples, such as a swab where your drip tube (if you have one) enters your skin, a rectal (bottom) swab, and possibly a stool (poo) sample. You'll normally be informed of the results within two to three days.

How will I be cared for while I'm in hospital?

You'll be moved to a single room with toilet facilities whilst in hospital (isolation). Treating you in a separate room can help us prevent further spread of CPE. Our staff will use gloves and aprons when caring for you.

How does CPE spread, and how can this be prevented?

Effective cleaning of the ward environment and good hand hygiene by everyone – staff, patients, and visitors – can help significantly reduce the risk of spreading CPE.

The most important thing for you to do is wash your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching medical devices, if you have any, such as your catheter tube and intravenous drips, and any wounds.

Your visitors will be asked to wash their hands before entering and leaving the room, and may be asked to wear an apron if providing care for you.

What about when I go home?

Whilst there is a chance that you may still be a carrier when you go home, quite often this will go with time and so no special measures or treatment is needed.

You should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene. If you have any concerns you can contact your GP for advice.

Before you leave the hospital, ask the doctor or nurse to give you a letter or card advising that you have had a CPE infection or are a carrier. This will be useful for any future appointments if you or anyone in your household is admitted to hospital.

Further advice

You can find further advice from the NHS on how to prevent the spread of infections.

www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/infections

How to contact us

If you need to contact us
or require further information...

Call: **0118 960 5140**

Email: infection.control@berkshire.nhs.uk

www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk

