

Information for patients, family and visitors

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales or CPEs

What are Enterobacterales?

Enterobacterales are bacteria normally living harmlessly in everyone's bowel (gut). If these bacteria move outside the gut they can cause infections such as urinary tract infections. This happens most often in people with a weakened immune system or certain long-term health conditions.

What are carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPEs)?

CPEs are Enterobacterales in our bowels that have become resistant to the usual and highly effective antibiotics. This turns them from being harmless to potentially causing serious infections. A CPE infection is harder to treat as there are fewer effective antibiotics. You may have CPE but not have any symptoms. When this is the case and CPE are living harmlessly in your body without causing problems, this is called colonisation or being a carrier of CPE. If you are a carrier you do not need to be treated. This is different to an infection, which typically causes symptoms and makes you unwell.

How are CPE Spread?

CPE is not spread through air by coughing or sneezing. It is mostly spread by touching surfaces. A person who is a carrier, or has a CPE infection, can spread CPE via unwashed hands, equipment used and not cleaned well enough or by common and casual use of any surfaces such as benches. You can spread or pick up CPE in the community or in hospital.

Why am I being tested?

Many people with CPE have no symptoms. You will be tested if there is a possibility that you are a carrier. It could be that you had medical care overseas or had contact with someone who has CPE. It is important to know if you have CPE so

that your doctors can identify the most appropriate antibiotic to treat you if you have an infection. We will also take measures to reduce the risk of CPE spreading to other people. If CPE causes an infection, it can make you very sick.

How will you test me for CPE?

We test a sample of your faeces (poo). If we can't test your faeces then we use a swab or small applicator to take a sample from your rectum (bottom). We may need to take other samples such as a urine sample.

When will I know if I have CPE?

Test results may take a few days. During this time, you may be asked to stay in a single room. Staff may also use precautions to keep you and other patients safe.

I've been told I have CPE, what happens now?

A positive result is discussed with you and recorded in your medical record.

- As always, staff will clean their hands before and after touching you. They will also wear an apron or gown when caring for you.
- If you are not already in a single room, you may be moved. A sign on your door will remind everyone of the importance of infection control.
- Ask your nurse if you can leave your room if you feel well enough.
- Thoroughly wash your hands often, using soap and water and especially after using the toilet, before leaving your room and when returning to your room.
- Only use the toilet dedicated for your use.

Who can visit me?

Healthy family members and visitors can visit you. If your visitors are sick, we advise them to stay away until they are better.

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Your visitors should:

- clean their hands before entering to your room and when leaving
- not use your bathroom
- not eat or drink in your room.

If a child visits you in hospital, they must be supervised at all times to ensure their safety. Visitors undergoing any health treatment themselves should check with their doctor before visiting.

Is there treatment for CPE?

Infections caused by CPE can be very difficult to treat. Infections caused by CPE are managed with advice from a specialist in infectious diseases who can help identify the best antibiotic treatment.

People with CPE will likely have it for a long time. 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. Your CPE status should not impact any other aspect of your care.

What happens when I go home?

There are some simple precautions at home.

Do not: share towels, cakes of soap, loofahs and face cloths unless they have been cleaned or washed first.

Do:

- share plates, cups and sheets after they have been cleaned, with other people (wash as normal)
- continue to visit and be visited by friends and family
- go wherever you want to go e.g. shopping.

Always wash your hands with soap and water:

- after going to the toilet
- before preparing and eating food
- before and after you touch any wounds or medical devices
- before and after visiting a public/shared space that requires frequent touching of surfaces (e.g. gym, public transport, shopping centres).

No special cleaning is required in your home and your clothing may be laundered as usual, along with the rest of the household laundry. All eating utensils and dishes can be washed in the normal way. You can return to work. There are no special precautions other than cleaning your hands.

It is important to tell other healthcare providers about your positive test result for CPE so they can organise the best care.

Where can I find more information?

Ask your doctor or nurse. You can also ask to speak with someone from the hospital's infection prevention and control team.

Further online information is available at:

www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au/patient-safety-programs/assurance-governance/healthcare-associated-infections

and the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health

www.safetyandquality.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/CPE-Guide_Patient-information.pdf

The Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) Program assists local health districts and specialty networks in NSW to manage and monitor the prevention and control of HAIs. For further information on the Healthcare Associated Infections program, please visit <http://www.cec.health.nsw.gov.au>