

Infection prevention and control team

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPEs)

Information for patients

Introduction

You are receiving this leaflet because you are either carrying CPE or you have acquired CPE. At Imperial College Healthcare, we take infection prevention and control very seriously. We take the opportunity to educate and support patients, relatives and staff members to prevent transmission of infections. Please ask our team any questions you have about the information below.

What are CPEs?

CPEs are a family of bacteria that usually live in the human gut without causing any problems or symptoms. This is known as being a 'carrier' (sometimes called 'colonisation') and does not require any treatment. Occasionally, CPEs can get into other parts of the body such as the bladder or bloodstream and cause serious infections, which can be life-threatening.

CPEs are members of the enterobacterales family that are resistant to a group of antibiotics (called carbapenems) usually prescribed to treat infections. This means these infections cannot be treated by certain antibiotics. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause a series of problems.

How we test you for CPEs

An increasing number of patients admitted to hospital are now screened to check whether they are carriers of CPEs. Screening can happen:

- at the time of admission
- during your hospital stay
- because you are at an increased risk of being a carrier

CPE screening requires a swab from your rectum (back passage) or a stool (poo) sample.

If a doctor or nurse thinks you have a CPE infection, a swab will be used to collect a specimen from the part of your body that is thought to be infected (such as a wound). This will be sent to the laboratory.

What will happen if I may have, or do have CPE?

If you are infected with or are a carrier of a CPE, we will usually place you in a single room while you are in hospital, away from other patients. We may need to make special arrangements for your care, for example, in scheduling planned procedures.

Carriers are not usually treated.

If you are infected with a CPE, we will give you antibiotics. It is important for us to know if you are carrying CPEs because if you develop an infection, we can choose the right antibiotic straight away.

How did you get CPE?

It is difficult to know when or where you picked it up. However, there is an increased chance of picking up CPEs if:

- you were a patient in a hospital abroad
- you were in a UK hospital that had patients carrying the bacteria
- if you have been in contact with a carrier

How is the spread of CPEs being controlled?

You can reduce the number of patients affected by following simple prevention and control measures:

- always wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet and before eating food
- avoid touching any areas of broken skin, wound dressings and medical devices that are inserted into your body
- always maintain good general hygiene

How staff control the spread of CPEs

- thorough hand hygiene by healthcare workers before and after contact with other patients
- screening to identify patients who are carriers of CPE
- using single rooms for patients infected with or carriers of CPE. If no single rooms are available, you may be cared for in an area where you are with other patients who also have similar CPE
- ensuring healthcare workers use contact precautions (gloves and aprons) when caring for patients who are infected with or carriers of CPE
- effective cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and reusable equipment that may be contaminated with CPE

Hospital visitors

As CPEs do not usually cause infections in healthy people, hospital visitors are at a low risk of CPE infection. Visitors should decontaminate their hands before and after touching you or your immediate environment.

How long will you be infected or carry the bacteria?

The duration is unknown. It could last for a few days or an unlimited amount of time. Practicing good hygiene can reduce the transmission rate.

What happens after you go home?

While you may still be a carrier when you go home, no special measures or treatment are required; any infection will have been treated before you leave hospital.

You should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene and standard cleaning.

Contact your GP if any concerns arise.

When you leave the hospital, you will be given a discharge letter which will include your CPE result. This will be shared with your GP.

If you are admitted to hospital in the future, please let a member of staff know or you are or have been a carrier and show them the letter.

Further information

Please speak to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns about CPE or other aspects of your treatment.

For general infection prevention and control (IPC) information, please contact the hospital's IPC team via our hospital switchboard on 020 3312 6666.

Visit: [Actions to contain carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/614242/actions-to-contain-carbapenemase-producing-enterobacterales.pdf)

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

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Published: January 2024
Review date: January 2027
Reference no: 926
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