

Patient information factsheet

Information for patients who have tested positive for CPE

What is CPE?

CPE is short for carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae. Enterobacteriaceae are bacteria that usually live harmlessly in the gut of humans. This is called colonisation (a person is said to be a carrier). However, if the bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infection.

Carbapenems are one of the most powerful types of antibiotics. Carbapenemases are enzymes (chemicals), made by some strains of these bacteria, which allow them to destroy carbapenem antibiotics and so the bacteria are said to be resistant to the antibiotics.

Why does carbapenem resistance matter?

Carbapenem antibiotics can only be given in hospital directly into the bloodstream. Until now, doctors have relied on them to successfully treat certain difficult infections when other antibiotics have failed to do so. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

What does it mean if the result is positive?

If the result is positive, your doctor or nurse will be able to discuss this with you in detail. If you have an infection, you will need to have antibiotics. However, if there are no signs of infection and you are simply carrying the bacteria, no treatment will be needed.

You will be accommodated in a single room, ideally with toilet facilities. We request that you do not leave your room unless it is for a test or an investigation, or as part of your therapy. Please do not use the public shops, restaurants or facilities.

Healthcare workers will wear gloves and a long sleeved gown when having contact with you. They will wash their hands when leaving your room.

It is important you wash your hands (or use a wet wipe) frequently, especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching any medical devices (urinary catheter tubes or intravenous drips, for example), particularly at the point where it is inserted into your body or skin.

We will ask your visitors to wash their hands on entering and leaving your room. We may ask them to wear a gown and gloves if they are assisting with your personal care. Visitors should avoid sitting on your bed and use the chairs provided in the ward.

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Do people who are carriers of CPE need any treatment?

If a person is a carrier of CPE, they do not need to be treated. However, if the bacteria have caused an infection, antibiotics will be prescribed.

What about when I go home?

While there is a chance that you may still be a carrier when you go home, this will usually go away with time. No special measures or treatment will be needed, as any infection will have been treated before you leave hospital. You should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene. If you have any concerns, you may wish to contact your GP for advice.

Before you leave hospital, ask the doctor or nurse to give you a letter advising that you have had an infection or have been colonised with CPE. Keep the letter safe – it's important that you make any healthcare professionals who are caring for you in the future aware of it. Should you or a member of your household be admitted to hospital, you should let the hospital staff know that you are, or have been, a carrier and show them the letter.

Where can I find more information?

If you would like any further information, please speak to a member of your healthcare team, who may also contact the infection prevention team for you.

Useful links

www.gov.uk/government/collections/carbapenem-resistance-guidance-data-and-analysis

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