

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

I am a contact of someone who is a carrier or has an infection, what does this mean?

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact: The Infection Prevention Team
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE, Telephone: 01904 725860

Where can I find more information?

If you would like any further information, please speak to a member of your care staff, who may also contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team for you. When you are at home, please contact your GP for further advice if you have any questions or concerns.

What does ‘carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae’ mean?

This leaflet sets out information about a certain group of bacteria, called ‘enterobacteriaceae’ (which is pronounced “Entero-bacteria-c-i”). These bacteria usually live harmlessly in our gut. However, if they find their way into the wrong place (e.g. the bladder or bloodstream), they can cause an infection.

Carbapenems are one of the most powerful types of antibiotics. Until now, doctors have relied on them to successfully treat certain ‘difficult’ infections when other antibiotics have failed. However, some enterobacteriaceae can produce chemicals (called carbapenemases) that destroy carbapenems. These bacteria are said to be resistant to the antibiotics and are called ‘carbapenemase-producing enterobacteriaceae’ (shortened to CPE).

A person with the bacteria in their gut is said to be a CPE carrier.

Why does carbapenem resistance matter?

Infections caused by CPE can be difficult to treat because the bacteria are often resistant to lots of antibiotics.

CPE can spread between patients in hospital, which can cause further infections. CPE can also pass their carbapenemase-making ability on to other bacteria, further encouraging the spread of CPE in hospitals.

How are CPE spread and how can this be prevented?

If a patient in hospital is a CPE carrier it can get into the ward environment and can also be passed on by direct contact with other patients. For these reasons, a CPE carrier will normally stay in a single room with its own toilet facilities.

Good hand hygiene by both staff and patients can reduce the risk of spread significantly. Effective cleaning of the ward and ward equipment is also important.

Why do I need to be screened for CPE?

Occasionally, it isn't immediately known that a patient is a CPE carrier and so they may not be placed into a single room straight away. Screening is offered if you have shared the same bay (or ward) with a patient who has been found to be carrying a CPE. This screening is offered as there is a slight chance that you could have picked up the CPE bacteria and are carrying it too.

How will I be screened for CPE?

Usually a rectal swab is inserted just inside your rectum (bottom). Alternatively, you may be asked to provide a sample of faeces (poo). The swab / sample will be sent to the laboratory and you will normally be told the result within two to three days. If the result is negative, the doctors or nurses will wish to check that further swabs / samples are negative. These are normally taken two and four days after the first swab / sample, then at weekly intervals for a further three weeks, but only whilst you remain in hospital. If all results are negative, no further actions are required.

Whilst you are being screened, you may be moved in a single room. Staff will wear aprons and gloves when looking after you.

What if the result is positive?

If the result is positive, do ask your doctor or nurse to explain this to you in more detail and to provide a letter or leaflet relating to being a CPE carrier. You will be given a single room until you leave hospital. No treatment is necessary, unless you have an infection due to the CPE, which your doctor will treat with antibiotics.

What about if I go home during screening?

Being screened for CPE will not stop you from leaving hospital. When you go home no special measures or treatment are required. You should carry on as normal; there is no need to make changes to your lifestyle, or to avoid contact with any friend or family member.

It is important to wash your hands regularly, or use a hand wipe, especially after using the toilet or commode, before meals, and when they look dirty. This will help any CPE you might be carrying from spreading.

If you did not complete the screening before going home, you will be offered further screens if you are admitted to the hospital again in the future. Screening won't take place whilst you are at home.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: Infection Prevention Team, York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725860.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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