

Toolkit for managing carbapenemase- producing Enterobacteriaceae in non-acute and community settings

Appendix 3: Advice Leaflet

Advice for the family of a person who is a carrier
of carbapenemase-producing
Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

What are 'Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae' (CPE)?

The gut of every normal, healthy human contains bacteria called Enterobacteriaceae. While they are in the gut, they cause no harm and help us digest our food. This is called colonisation. However, if these bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infection.

Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) are a strain of these Enterobacteriaceae. They have developed a resistance to a powerful group of antibiotics called carbapenems. Carbapenems are an important group of antibiotics that doctors often rely on to fight infections where treatment with other antibiotics has failed. It's important that we stop the spread of CPE in our hospitals. This will make sure that these antibiotics continue to be available to treat infections in the future

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. Therefore, in a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of bacteria resistant to carbapenems can cause problems.

Does carriage of CPE need to be treated?

No, not normally. People who have CPE in their body do not need to be treated as these bacteria live harmlessly in the gut, without causing problems. However, if you have an infection caused by CPE, you will need antibiotics to treat it.

How are CPE spread?

CPE is spread through direct contact with the person or indirectly from the person's immediate environment including through care equipment.

In a hospital or care setting (including care received at home) where a patient is carrying this bacterium, the environment can become contaminated and the bacterium can spread to others. It is important that the care environment e.g. equipment used for care, toilets, furniture, is kept clean and that good hand hygiene is used including before and after coming contact.

Are family at risk of contracting CPE?

CPE are not a risk to healthy people. The most important thing that family members can do is to maintain good personal hygiene, including washing hands with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. Good hygiene such as keeping toilet and bathroom areas clean and using separate towels are the best ways to prevent the spread. Clothes and laundry in the household should be washed normally at the hottest temperature advised on the label.

Will close family have to be screened for CPE if admitted to hospital?

If admitted to hospital, tell a member of hospital staff that a member of your household is or has been a carrier of CPE. You may be screened for CPE as part of the admission procedure.

Where can I find more information?

If you have any concerns or queries you may wish to speak to your family member's healthcare worker or contact your GP for advice. Alternatively, further information can be found in the HPS leaflet Patient Screening for Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) - Leaflets for Healthcare Workers and Patients <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/guidelines/detail.aspx?id=1661>

If you require this leaflet in other languages please contact HPS on:
NSS.HPSInfectionControl@nhs.net