



Public Health  
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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

### **Annex B:**

Advice for individuals receiving care at home or in the community who have an infection with or are colonised by carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae

### **Where can I find more information?**

If you have any concerns or queries you may wish to speak to your healthcare worker or contact your GP for advice. Alternatively, if you would like any further information the Public Health England website is another source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/carbapenem-resistance-guidance-data-and-analysis>

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## What are '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.

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (sometimes abbreviated to CPE) are Enterobacteriaceae which have become resistant to carbapenems, a group of powerful antibiotics. The resistance is helped by carbapenemases, enzymes made by some strains of the bacteria, which allow them to destroy carbapenem antibiotics and so becoming resistant to them and most other penicillin-like 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. Therefore, in a hospital or other care setting, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of these resistant bacteria can cause problems.

## Does carriage of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae need to be treated?

If you are carrier of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae, you do not need to be treated. As mentioned, these bacteria can live harmlessly in the gut. However, if the bacteria have caused an infection then antibiotics will be required. Please do ask your doctor or healthcare worker to explain your situation to you in more detail.

## How can the spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae be prevented?

The most important measure you can take is to maintain effective hand hygiene, washing your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching any medical devices (such as your urinary catheter tube or other medical tubes) if you have any, particularly at the point where it is inserted into the body or skin.

As you are receiving care in your own home, you should not restrict your lifestyle in any way; however a few sensible measures will prevent spread to others. As well as effective hand hygiene, keeping toilet and bathroom areas clean, and using separate towels, are the best ways to prevent spread. You should expect that visiting healthcare workers will clean their hands on arrival, before and after providing direct care, and on leaving. They will use gloves and an apron when caring for you.

## What about my family and visitors?

There is no need for you to advise visitors that you are a carrier or have an infection, as long as hygiene measures are adequate. If you have an infection, it is important to work with your healthcare worker to ensure that any discharge from a wound, for example, is contained within an appropriate dressing to prevent contamination of clothes or soft furnishings.

Your doctor or nurse may give you a letter or card advising that you have had an infection or been colonised with carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae. This will be useful for the future and it is important that you make health care staff aware of it. Should you or a member of your household be admitted to hospital or other healthcare facility, you should let the hospital staff know that you are, or have been, a carrier and show them the letter / card.