



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

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

Annex C:

Advice for contacts of a carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) carrier

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 of information:

<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 become 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, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

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

If a person is a carrier of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae, they 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.

How are carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae spread?

In a hospital or healthcare setting when a patient is carrying this bacterium, the environment can become contaminated which can then spread to others through direct or indirect contact. Staff work hard to ensure that the environment is kept clean and you will see staff cleaning their hands. If you have any concerns please speak to the staff or your carer.

What does being a contact of a carrier mean?

This means that you have been in the same ward or care environment as a person who is a carrier of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae.

Do I need screening?

As a contact of a carrier, if you are admitted to hospital you may be offered screening for carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae. This screening is offered as there is a *slight* chance that you could have picked up the bacteria and are carrying it too.

Do I need treatment?

Carrying carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae is not a risk to healthy people. The most important measure to take is to maintain good hand hygiene, 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 should be washed normally at the hottest temperature advised on the label.