

Carbapenemase producing Enterobacterales (CPE) information leaflet
for patients (community)

What are 'CPE'?

- The gut of every healthy human contains billions of bacteria, including a type of bacteria called Enterobacterales. ‘
- ‘Carbapenemase producing Enterobacterales’ (CPE) are a strain that have developed resistance to a 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 is not effective.
- These bacteria usually live harmlessly in our gut, causing no harm and help us digest food. This is known as ‘colonisation’ and a colonised person does not show any signs of infection and so will not require any treatment. However, if these bacteria get into a different part of the body, e.g., the bladder, a wound, the respiratory tract, or bloodstream, they can cause infection.
- CPE infections can be difficult to treat because they are resistant to many antibiotics, including carbapenem antibiotics which are used to treat serious infections. Carbapenemases are enzymes (chemicals) made by some strains of bacteria which destroy carbapenem antibiotics.

How do people get CPE?

- CPE can be spread from one person to another if hands are not washed thoroughly or by contact with soiled equipment and surfaces such as tables, chairs, door handles. It is, therefore, important that hands are washed regularly and especially after using the toilet.
- CPE is common in some hospitals, both in the UK and abroad. People who have been in these hospitals may have picked up CPE from the patients who were carrying it.

If I have CPE, do I need treatment?

- Most people with CPE are ‘colonised’ and do not need treatment.
- Carrying CPE in the gut does not make people sick.
- There is no treatment for eliminating CPE colonisation.
- People colonised with CPE may lead a normal life, without it causing them any concerns.
- Provided you follow standard good practice hand hygiene there is no reason to believe that you are putting family members or other people at risk.
- If you have an infection, antibiotics will be required to treat the infection.

How can I stop CPE from spreading?

- You should wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet or commode and before eating. Good hand hygiene is the key to reducing the spread of any bugs and viruses.

- It is important to wash your hands before and after emptying a urine catheter bag or when changing a wound dressing. If you have a wound or a catheter, it is important not to touch them unless you have been advised to do so by your nurse.
- You should inform healthcare staff that you are colonised with CPE, including if you or a member of your household are admitted or if you are attending hospital for an appointment, or if you require an ambulance for any reason.
- By knowing which patients are carrying CPE, we can make sure that they receive the best care to prevent the spread of CPE and to prevent CPE infections.
- It is very important to know that someone is carrying CPE so that if an infection develops, medical staff can quickly identify the best antibiotic to treat it.

Managing CPE in your own home

- No special measures are required when you are at home; you should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene especially after using the toilet, cleaning the toilet, before preparing any food and eating. (The following World Health Organisation video demonstrates how should we wash our hands effectively: [Hand washing \(youtube.com\)](#)).
- Try not to use antibacterial soaps as they contribute to the growing problem of antimicrobial resistance which is affecting our ability to use antibiotics.
- There is no need to have separate dishes, glasses, or cutlery and these can be cleaned as normal.
- Bed linen, clothes and other laundry can be washed as normal.
- If you are colonised, that is you 'carry' CPE, it is acceptable for your family and friends to come to see you at home. The chance of spread of CPE to most friends and family is usually very small especially if everyone keeps their hands clean.
- If a relative or friend is helping care for you at home, it is essential that they wash their hands with soap and water before and after they give care to you. They may want to use gloves and apron if they are going to be in contact with your bodily fluids e.g., poo and urine.
- Visitors, including children should wash their hands thoroughly with liquid soap and warm running water before leaving.
- It is a good idea to make sure the toilet is flushed with the lid down and the toilet seat is wiped with a disinfectant wipe after you use. Hands should be washed with soap and water afterwards.
- If you have more than one toilet in your house, you could decide to keep a separate toilet for your use only if you wish.
- CPE contacts are not required to avoid or limit physical or intimate contact and there is no need to sleep in separate beds.
- When you are out in the public, you can carry some alcohol based handrub/gel with you in case you don't have access to soap and water.
- If you use public toilets, make sure the toilet is clean when you leave it and wash your hands thoroughly before leaving the toilet.

If you have any questions about the information provided in this leaflet, it is very important that you discuss these with a member of the nursing or medical team caring for you.