

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales: General information

This leaflet explains *Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales (CPE)*, a rare but important hospital infection of which to be aware. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

What are CPE?

CPE are a family of bacteria that usually live in the human gut without causing any problems or symptoms. This is known as being a 'carrier' (sometimes called 'colonisation') and does not require any treatment. Occasionally, CPE can get into other parts of the body such as the bladder or bloodstream and can cause serious infections, which can be life-threatening.

CPE are members of the Enterobacterales family that are resistant to a group of antibiotics (called Carbapenems) that are usually prescribed to treat infections caused by these bacteria. This means these infections cannot be treated by certain antibiotics. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

How will you test me for CPE?

An increasing number of patients admitted to hospital are now screened to check whether they are carriers of CPE. Screening can happen at any time of hospital admission, during your hospital stay or because you are at increased risk of being a carrier. CPE screening requires a swab from your rectum (back passage) or a stool sample because CPE live in the gut.

If the doctor or nurse thinks you have a CPE infection, a swab will be used to collect a specimen from the site that is thought to be infected (such as a wound), which will be sent to the laboratory.

What will happen if I have CPE?

If you are infected with or if you are a carrier of CPE, we will usually place you in a single side room while you are in hospital, away from other patients. We may need to make special arrangements for your care, for example in scheduling planned procedures. Carriers are not usually treated.

If you are infected with CPE, we will give you antibiotics. The type of antibiotics will depend on where you are infected and which antibiotics will treat the CPE.

It is important for us to know if you are carrying CPE because if you develop an infection, we can choose the right antibiotic straight away.

Hospital patients with a weakened immune system or those who have had an operation or any other invasive procedure are at a greater risk of getting an infection caused by CPE.

How did I get CPE?

It can be difficult to say when or where you picked up CPE. However, there is an increased chance of picking up these bacteria if you have been in a hospital abroad or in a UK hospital that has patients carrying the bacteria or if you have been in contact with a carrier elsewhere.

How is the spread of CPE being controlled?

We can reduce the number of patients affected by CPE by following simple infection prevention and control measures:

- Thorough hand hygiene before and after contact with every patient.
- Screening to identify patients who are carriers of CPE.
- Using single rooms for patients infected with or for carriers of CPE. If no single rooms are available, you may be cared for in an area where you are with other patients who have CPE.
- Ensuring healthcare workers use gloves and aprons when caring for patients who are infected with or who are carriers of CPE.
- Effective cleaning and disinfection of surfaces and equipment that may be contaminated with CPE.

The most important measure for you to take is to wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet and before eating food. Avoid touching any areas of broken skin or wound dressings and maintain good general hygiene.

As CPE does not usually cause infections in healthy people, hospital visitors are at low risk of CPE infection. However, visitors should wash their hands before touching you or the immediate environment.

Help us to prevent the spread of CPE

- Please don't hesitate to ask staff if they have cleaned their hands before they treat or attend to you.
- Good hygiene is one of the best ways of tackling CPE. Wash your hands with soap and water after a visit to the toilet, before every meal and at regular intervals throughout the day. Patients in bed can ask for a bowl of water for washing or can use hand wipes.
- Anyone visiting a patient with CPE should wash their hands with soap and water when they leave the ward. Visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons unless they are giving physical care.

- Do not sit on any other patients' beds and do not let any visitors sit on yours. Please use the chairs provided.
- Keep the area around your bed clutter free. This allows us to clean the area more effectively.

What happens after I go home?

While you may still be a carrier when you go home, no special measures or treatment are required as any infection will have been treated before you leave hospital or may continue as per your discharge instructions. You should carry on maintaining good hand hygiene.

Before you leave hospital, ask the Doctor or nurse to give you a letter advising that you have had an infection or have been / are a carrier of CPE. This will be useful for the future and it is important that you make healthcare staff aware of it. **If you or a member of your household is admitted to hospital, you should let the hospital staff know that you are or have been a carrier** and show them the letter.

To whom can I talk to?

If you have any questions about your condition, please talk to one of the nursing or medical staff.

Further information

If you have any questions or concerns about *Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacterales*, please contact Infection Prevention and Control on 020 8725 2459 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health. **Web:** www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones. **Tel:** 111

AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website (www.accessable.co.uk). The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



Reference: COR_CPE_02 **Published:** February 2024 **Review date:** February 2026