

What is CPE?

Every healthy person has tiny bugs in their tummy (gut). These bugs are called bacteria. They do no harm in your gut and help you digest your food. But these bacteria can cause infections if they get into the wrong part of your body.

Some of these bugs are called CPE. They have learned to fight against some of the medicines that doctors use to stop infections. These medicines are called antibiotics. It's important that we stop the spread of CPE in our hospitals so these antibiotics can still be used.

If I have CPE, will I need treatment?

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

About CPE screening

Why are patients screened for CPE?

If we know which patients are carrying CPE, we can make sure that they get the best care. This will stop CPE from spreading.

CPE infections can be difficult to treat. It is very important to know that someone is carrying CPE so that if an infection starts, medical staff can quickly find the right antibiotic to treat it.

How are patients screened for CPE?

When you go into hospital in Scotland, you might be asked to be screened for CPE if you have:

- been in a hospital outside Scotland
- had CPE in the past.

You may also be asked to be screened if you have been in contact with someone with CPE when you were in hospital.

How will I be tested for CPE?

If you need a sample to be taken for testing, a member of your care team will put a swab a small distance into your rectum (bottom). Or they may test a sample of faeces (poo). Some other samples may be needed, for example if you have a wound or urinary catheter.

Your privacy and dignity will be respected at all times when these samples are being taken.

All swabs and samples will be sent to the laboratory to check for CPE, and your care team will tell you the results.

You may be asked to stay in a single room until we know the result of your test.

Information for patients with a positive CPE test

What happens if my CPE test is positive?

If your screening test for CPE is positive, it means you are carrying CPE bacteria. This means you have the bacteria in your gut. This does not normally cause problems for people who are fit and healthy and it might not make you ill. If you are showing no signs of infection, no treatment is needed.

If you do get an infection, it is very helpful for your doctor to know that you are carrying CPE. This means that they can pick the best antibiotic to treat your infection quickly.

If your CPE screening test is positive, you may be tested for CPE each week for as long as you stay in hospital.

While I am in hospital, what will be done to stop and control infection?

You may be asked to stay in a single room during your hospital stay or until your doctors are sure you will not spread CPE to other patients.

The most important thing you can do to stop infection is to wash your hands well with soap and water after going to the toilet. You can also use alcohol-based hand rub. Make sure you do not touch any of your medical devices such as urinary catheters or intravenous drips. This will lower the risk of you getting an infection caused by CPE.

Can I still have visitors?

Patients with CPE can still have visitors in hospital. We advise children and babies not to visit because they are at more risk from infection. All visitors must wash their hands when they enter and leave your room.

What happens when I leave hospital?

If you are carrying CPE when you leave hospital, this may go away over time.

You do not need to do anything special at home other than washing your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. If a relative or friend is helping care for you at home, they need to wash their hands with soap and water before and after they give care to you.

Bed linen, clothes, and other laundry can be washed as normal.

If you go back into hospital or another healthcare environment, it is important that you let the staff caring for you know that you have had a positive test for CPE in the past. This will make sure that you are tested again and receive the best care to prevent the spread of CPE and to reduce the risk of you developing a CPE infection.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information about CPE, please speak to a member of the nursing or medical team caring for you.

Please use the space below to write any questions that you may have for the team caring for you.

This leaflet is available in other languages, as well as in large print, easy read and Braille (English only).

To ask for a copy of this leaflet in another language or format, please contact Health Protection Scotland: NSS.HPSHAIScreening@nhs.net

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