

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

Appendix 3: Advice Leaflet

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

What are 'Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae'(CPE)?

The gut of every normal, healthy human contains bacteria called Enterobacteriaceae. While they are in the gut, they cause no harm and help us digest our food. This is called colonisation. However, if these bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infection.

Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) are a strain of these Enterobacteriaceae. They have developed a resistance to a powerful 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 has failed. It's important that we stop the spread of CPE in our hospitals. This will make sure that these antibiotics continue to be available to treat infections in the future

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 CPE need to be treated?

No, not normally. People who have CPE in their body do not need to be treated as these bacteria live harmlessly in the gut, without causing problems. However, if you have an infection caused by CPE, you will need antibiotics to treat it. Please ask your doctor or care worker to explain your situation to you in more detail if you are unsure.

How can the spread of CPE be prevented?

The most important thing you can do is to wash your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. You should make sure hands are clean before touching any medical devices or tubes (such as your urinary catheter tube or other medical tubes or lines) 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. Bed linen, clothes, and other laundry can be washed as normal.

If you need to go into hospital or another healthcare environment, it is important that you let the staff caring for you know that you have had an infection with, or are colonised by CPE, or have been in the past. This will make sure that you receive the best care you need.

You should expect that any care workers, who need to visit you, will clean their hands on arrival, before and after providing direct care, and on leaving. Disposable aprons and gloves will be worn by care workers to prevent the spread of CPE to other vulnerable patients whom they will visit next.

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. There is no need for a family carer to wear gloves and apron. 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.

Where can I find more information?

If you have any concerns or questions you can speak to your healthcare worker or contact your GP for advice. Alternatively, further information can be found in the HPS leaflet Patient Screening for Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) - Leaflets for Healthcare Workers and Patients <http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/guidelines/detail.aspx?id=1661>

If you require this leaflet in other languages please contact HPS on:
NSS.HPSInfectionControl@nhs.net