

Carbapenemase-producing enterobacterales (CPE) screening

Patient information sheet

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. They can refer you to the infection prevention and control team if required.

Understanding CPE screening

The gut of every normal, healthy human contains bacteria called enterobacteriaceae. While the bacteria are in the gut, it causes 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.

CPE is a strain of enterobacteriaceae 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.

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.

However, if you have an infection caused by the bacteria you will need antibiotics to treat it.

Why are patients screened for CPE?

It has been identified that there has been an increase in CPE cases in the community. By knowing which patients are carrying the bacteria, we can put measures in place early to make sure that they receive the best care to prevent the spread of CPE and infections caused by it. Infections caused by CPE can be difficult to treat. It is very important to know if someone is carrying CPE so that if an infection develops, clinical staff can quickly identify the best antibiotic to treat it.

How are patients screened for CPE?

All patients who are admitted overnight are screened for CPE. If you have had an overnight stay in a hospital, UK or abroad, within the last 12 months or if you are normally resident abroad and travel home, we will keep you isolated until we get the result back.

Patients staying in critical care are sometimes very sick so all patients in critical care will have a weekly screen to ensure that there is no ongoing spread and to help keep everyone safe.

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Large print copies and alternative language versions of this leaflet can be made available on request.

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I have recently been a patient at Royal Papworth Hospital and am about to be re-admitted. Will I need to be screened at every admission?

If you have a CPE screen taken at Royal Papworth Hospital within the last two months and you have not been admitted to a healthcare facility since that screen you will not be re-swabbed.

How will I be tested for CPE?

You will be asked to lie on your side and a member of your care team will insert a swab a small distance into your rectum (bottom). Your privacy and dignity will be respected at all times when this sample is being taken. All swabs and samples will be sent to the laboratory to see which bacteria grow, and any positive result will be shared with you. If you have any questions about your screening, please ask your care team.

Can I still have visitors while I am waiting for my test results?

Yes, you can still have visitors even if you are being isolated. All visitors must wash their hands when they enter and leave the room.

What happens if my CPE test is positive?

If your screening test for CPE is positive, it means you are carrying the bacteria. This does not normally cause problems in people who are fit and healthy and you may not suffer any ill effects.

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 identify the best antibiotic to treat your infection quickly.

An infection control specialist nurse will visit you and give you further information and answer any questions you may have.

What can be done to prevent any spread CPE?

You will be cared for in a single room for most of your stay. We will encourage you to keep this as clutter free as possible to allow our staff to ensure that it is kept clean. Staff and visitors must perform hand hygiene before and after attending to you and we regularly audit the condition and cleanliness of all clinical areas.

Where can I get more information?

If you would like more information, please speak to a member of the clinical team caring for you, who can contact our local infection prevention and control team on your behalf.

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