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## Advice for Patients

### Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

#### Infection Prevention Team

#### **What does 'carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae' mean?**

Enterobacteriaceae are bacteria (germs) that usually live harmlessly in the gut of humans. This is called 'colonisation' (a person is said to be a 'carrier'). However, if the bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream they can cause infection. Carbapenems are one of the most powerful types of antibiotics. Carbapenemases are enzymes (chemicals), made by some strains of these bacteria, which allow them to destroy carbapenem antibiotics and so the bacteria are said to be resistant to the antibiotics.

#### **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. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

#### **Does carriage of or infection with carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae need to be treated?**

If a person is a carrier of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (sometimes called CPE), they do not need to be treated. However, if the bacteria have caused an infection then antibiotics will be required as advised by a Consultant Microbiologist.

#### **How might I 'pick up' carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae?**

These bacteria can sometimes be found, living harmlessly, in the gut of humans and so it can be difficult to say when or where you picked it up.

However, there is an increased chance of picking up these bacteria if you have been a patient in a hospital abroad **or** in a UK hospital that has had patients carrying the bacteria, **or** if you have been in close contact with a carrier in hospital **or** in the community. If any of these apply to you, and you need to be admitted to hospital, screening will be arranged and you may be accommodated in a single room at least until the results of the tests are known.

#### **How will I be cared for whilst in hospital?**

You will be accommodated in a single room whilst in hospital and on any subsequent admissions. You may be asked to provide a number of samples to send to the laboratory to check if you are carrying or have an infection with the bacteria. These will probably be taken on a weekly basis during your stay. You may also be tested if you have been in close contact with a patient in this hospital who has been found to have a resistant organism. The samples might include e.g. the site an intravenous

drip enters the skin, rectal swab i.e. a sample taken by inserting a swab briefly just inside your rectum (bottom), and/or a sample of faeces. You will normally be informed of the results within two or three days but none of these measures will hinder your care in any way.

### **How can the spread of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae be prevented?**

If a patient in hospital is carrying these bacteria it can get into the ward environment and be passed on by direct contact to another patient. For that reason, you may be accommodated in a single room to help prevent spread. Healthcare workers must wash and clean their hands regularly. They will use gloves and aprons (or gown) when caring for you. The most important measure for you to take is to wash your hands well with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. You should avoid touching any medical devices (if you have any) such as your urinary catheter tube and your intravenous drip, particularly at the point where it is inserted into the body or skin. Visitors will be asked to clean their hands on entering and leaving the room and may be asked to wear gloves an apron (or gown) especially if they are assisting in your care. Effective environmental cleaning and good hand hygiene by all, staff, patients and visitors, can reduce the risk of spread significantly.