

The ROYAL MARSDEN

NHS Foundation Trust

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

Infection prevention and control

Patient Information



NHS

What is Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)?

CPE is short for carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae which is a bacteria that is very resistant to many antibiotics we commonly use.

Enterobacteriaceae are bacteria that usually live harmlessly in the gut. This is called colonisation. Carbapenems are one of the most powerful types of antibiotics that are known to kill lots of bacteria. The bacteria can release an enzyme (chemical) called Carbapenemases which allows them to destroy a specific group of antibiotics called carbapenems which will stop them being effective. The bacteria will then be considered resistant to the antibiotics.

I have CPE. Does this mean I have an infection?

Being a carrier of CPE (colonised with CPE) is usually harmless. Most people will not know they are colonised with CPE. People whose immune systems are weakened are at higher risk. If these bacteria get into or start growing in a different part of the body, eg the bladder, a wound or bloodstream, they can cause severe infection.

How do you look for CPE?

You will be tested (screened) for CPE on admission and routinely throughout your admission.

The screens will include:

- rectal swab – if you do not consent to a rectal swab, a stool sample can be used
- urine sample – if you have a urinary catheter
- swabs of any wounds or skin lesions.

How does CPE spread?

CPE is common in some hospitals, both in the UK and abroad, so there is an increased risk of acquiring the bacteria if you are in hospital. However, there are things you can do to help prevent this. CPE can be spread from one person to another if hands are not washed thoroughly or by contact with soiled equipment and surfaces such as tables, chairs, and door handles. It is important to wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet.

How will this affect me?

Do not worry. If you have been told you are positive for CPE, you will ideally be in a single room during an inpatient stay with ensuite toilet facilities (if available). Staff will wear gloves and a long-sleeved gown during contact with you.

We advise that you wash your hands frequently, especially after going to the bathroom. You should avoid touching any medical devices (eg urinary catheter tubes or intravenous drips) particularly at the point where it is inserted into your body or skin. All visitors should also ensure they follow the same practice and wash their hands thoroughly.

This positive result will not affect you coming to outpatient appointments. You will still be able to receive your treatment as usual in outpatient departments and attend clinics.

What is the treatment for CPE?

If you are a carrier of CPE, you do not need to be treated to get rid of it. However, if you become unwell with an infection, the antibiotics used may be stronger than usual. Good hand hygiene practices are important and can help to prevent an infection:

- wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet before meals and when they look dirty
- wash your hands before and after emptying a urine catheter bag or when changing a wound dressing

- if you have a wound or a catheter, do not touch them unless you have been advised to and ensure you wash your hands thoroughly beforehand.

What about when I go home?

While you will still be a carrier when you go home, no special measures or treatment will be needed. You should carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene. If you are admitted into another hospital, you should let them know that you are a CPE carrier.

Contact details

If you would like more information, or if you have any questions/concerns about CPE, please speak to your doctor or nurse. Alternatively, you can ask to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention and Control team on **020 8661 3917**.

Alternatively, please call:

The Royal Marsden Macmillan Hotline: 020 8915 6899

You can ring the hotline 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Call us straight away if you are feeling unwell or are worried about the side effects of cancer treatments.

This service provides specialist advice and support to all Royal Marsden patients, as well as to their carers, and both hospital and community-based doctors and nurses caring for Royal Marsden patients.

For further information, please visit The Royal Marsden website: www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk/your-care/support-services/royal-marsden-macmillan-hotline

Notes and questions

References

This booklet is evidence based wherever the appropriate evidence is available, and represents an accumulation of expert opinion and professional interpretation.

Details of the references used in writing this booklet are available on request from:

The Royal Marsden Help Centre

Telephone: Chelsea 020 7811 8438 / 020 7808 2083

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No conflicts of interest were declared in the production of this booklet.

Should you require information in an alternative format, please contact The Royal Marsden Help Centre.

The patient information service is generously supported by The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity.

royalmarsden.org

Registered Charity No.1095197



Published March 2024. Planned review March 2027
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Radiotherapy and
Chemotherapy Services
F538021 & F538022

