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| Carbapenemase-producing *Enterbacteriaceae* (CPE) |
| Information for residents, family and carers |

## What is CPE?

***Enterobacteriaceae*** is the name given to a family of bacteria or germs that normally live in our bowel. A well known *Enterobacteriaceae* you may have heard of is *Escherichia coli* or *E. coli*.

**Carbapenems** are a group of antibiotics (for example, meropenem) that usually work against these bacteria. Some bacteria have become hard to treat because these antibiotics no longer work – the bacteria have become resistant to the antibiotics. These bacteria are called **carbapenemase-producing *Enterobacteriaceae*** (CPE).

## What is the issue?

People living in long term residential care facilities are at risk of picking up infections from each other, particularly when sharing toilets and bathrooms.

Some bacteria have become difficult to treat with commonly used antibiotics. We call these bacteria multi-resistant organisms. CPE is one example of this. As CPE can be difficult to treat, it is important we reduce both the risk of people catching it and, passing it on to others.

## How do you get CPE?

In Australia, CPE infections are rare. When people do get an infection with CPE, it has often been picked up when the person has had medical care overseas. CPE is found in patients in hospitals and clinics around the world, but particularly in Greece, India and South-East Asia.

People who carry CPE are at risk of getting a CPE infection if they have an operation (especially on the prostate) or need treatment involving ventilators (breathing machines), catheters or intravenous drips. People who have taken some antibiotics for long periods of time are also at risk of becoming colonised or infected with CPE.

## Will CPE make me unwell?

In most people CPE are harmless and do not cause infection. However in some people, such as those whose immune system is weak or compromised, CPE can become a serious problem. It may cause urinary tract infections (UTI), pneumonia, bladder or kidney infections, bloodstream infections, and many other types of infections.

Although healthy people do not usually get CPE infections, it is important to know that people may carry CPE in their bowel or a wound without symptoms. This is called colonisation.

## How is CPE spread?

CPE is usually found in the bowel of infected or colonised people. Sometimes, it may also be found in urine, wounds and other sites. CPE is usually spread person to person through contact with someone who is infected or colonised.

CPE may also be spread via equipment that has been shared between residents and has not been adequately cleaned and disinfected between uses; or through contamination of the environment.

## Is there treatment for CPE?

Infections caused by CPE can be very difficult to treat. There are not many options for treating CPE infections as the bacteria are usually resistant to most antibiotics. While it is always better that people try to prevent the infection in the first place, any infections caused by CPE will be appropriately managed with advice from an Infectious Diseases specialist.

## What will it mean for me if I have CPE?

If you have CPE there should be few changes to the care you receive. Staff will need to wear a gown and gloves when they provide you with close personal care, such as showering or toileting. You will still be able to join in group activities and eat your meals in the dining area.

If you need to be admitted to hospital it is very important that you let them know that you have CPE so that they can make sure they put the right precautions in place.

## How can I help prevent the spread of CPE?

Regardless of whether or not you have CPE, it is important that you follow the precautions listed below. Staff may need to assist you in being able to carry them out.

* Use your own toilet wherever possible and remember to always wash your hands with soap and water and dry them thoroughly after going to the toilet and before eating food. You should also wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand rub whenever you leave your room.
* Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
* Avoid sharing grooming items such as nail scissors, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes.
* Cover any skin wounds whenever possible.
  + Make sure you follow instructions and advice provided by your doctor or healthcare provider on how to care for wounds, or manage medical devices (e.g., urinary catheters).

## Is my family at risk of getting CPE?

Healthy people usually do not get CPE. The best way for your family not to get CPE is by washing their hands after visiting you, after going to the toilet and before eating.

Visitors can continue to visit you and do not need to wear gowns or gloves when visiting unless they will be participating in your personal care such as showering or toileting. It is important that your visitors wash their hands or use an alcohol based hand rub before and after visiting you.

## Want to know more?

Further details of infection prevention and control for residential and community aged care services can be found on the National Health and Medical Research Council’s [website](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/d1034) <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/guidelines-publications/d1034>.

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