

Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) and Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO)



Information for patients and visitors

This leaflet explains how we test for, treat and prevent the spread of bacteria (germs) called Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) and Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO). It also explains how you can help to prevent their spread in hospital. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the doctors or nurses caring for you.

Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your **name** and **date of birth** and check your **ID band**. If you don't have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address.

If we don't ask these questions, then please ask us to check.

Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

What are CPE and CPO?

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) and Carbapenemase-producing Organisms (CPO) are types of bacteria that usually live harmlessly in your gut and on your skin. This is called colonisation. Someone who is colonised is called a carrier. You would not know you were a carrier unless you were tested.

When do CPE and CPO become harmful?

Most of the time CPE and CPO do not cause any problems and no treatment is needed. But if the bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause an infection, particularly in patients with a low immune system.

This can be a problem because these bacteria:

- can be spread to and cause infection in other vulnerable patients
- are almost totally resistant to some of the strongest antibiotics that we use in hospital. There can even be difficult cases where other antibiotics have not worked, which means they cannot be used to treat a CPE/CPO infection

It is important to note that these bacteria do not cause infections in healthy people in close contact with the patient, such as staff and visitors, but they can be spread by them.

Who is most at risk of getting a CPE / CPO infection?

People whose ability to fight infections is low. This includes people:

- with cancer
- having dialysis
- being treated in an intensive care unit
- who have had transplants
- chronic wounds.



How is CPE/CPO spread in hospital?

This bacteria can be spread:

- from person to person, on the hands and skin of staff, students, patients and visitors, by touching the hands of someone who is infected or colonised
- by touching room surfaces and objects such as equipment, bowls, surfaces around patients, commodes and toilets that have CPE/CPO on them.

They are not spread through the air or by coughing or sneezing.

Preventing the spread of CPE/CPO

On wards

- Everyone - staff, students and visitors - must wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol handrub before and after direct contact with a patient.
- Patients must wash their hands with soap and water before eating meals and after using the toilet.
- Anyone helping a patient with their personal care must wash their hands with soap and water before and after.
- We may have to do extra cleaning in some areas so patients may sometimes need to be moved to another bed space.
- We may close a ward to admissions and restrict visiting.

In isolation rooms

- We will put a sign on the isolation room door to remind everyone of the precautions they need to take.
- Healthcare staff must wash their hands before and after direct contact with a patient and use gloves and aprons when caring for you.
- Visitors must wash their hands when they go into and when they leave the room and they may be asked to wear aprons/gowns.



- Visitors must not use patient bathrooms.
- Patients must wash their hands well with soap and water, before eating meals and after going to the toilet
- Patients should avoid touching medical devices (if they have any) such as urinary catheter tubes and intravenous drips particularly at the entry site.

Healthcare staff will not be offended if patients ask if they have decontaminated their hands at appropriate times. If any area, especially toilets appear dirty, please inform the nurse in charge who will take prompt action.

How do I know if I have CPE/CPO?

One of the main ways in which CPE/CPO is spread is by the transfer of patients between hospitals, so we will/may screen (test) you for CPE/CPO if you:

- are transferred to the UK from a hospital abroad or have been an inpatient in a hospital abroad over the last 12 months.
- are moved here from another hospital in the UK where there are patients with CPE/CPO
- we know or suspect you have come into contact with someone who has CPE/CPO or you are known to be colonised with the bacteria

What does the screening test involve?

We usually take samples from your rectum, where a swab (very similar to a long cotton bud) is briefly put just inside your bottom. We may also test samples of your faeces (poo).

These samples are then tested in a laboratory. We normally tell you the provisional results in two - three days. However confirmation from a reference laboratory may take longer.



What happens if you think I may be colonised with CPE/CPO?

- We will move you to a single room and you will be allocated your own toilet or commode to prevent the spread of the bacteria. Where a single room is not available, we may place you with other patients with a similar risk.
- We will take three sets of screens 48 hours apart, to check whether you are carrying the bacteria.

What happens if I have CPE/CPO?

- If the screening test shows you are **colonised** with CPE/CPO (you test 'positive'), to prevent the spread of the bacteria, we will put you in a single room and you will be allocated your own toilet facilities or commode, for the rest of your hospital stay.
- If it shows you have a CPE/CPO **infection** we will treat you with very strong antibiotics.

How did I pick up CPE/CPO?

It can be difficult to say when or where you came into contact with these bacteria and became colonised or infected. But there is a greater chance of picking them up 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 contact elsewhere with someone who is colonised.

What happens when I go home?

You can still be a carrier when you go home. You do not need to take any special measures or have treatment as we will have treated any infection before you left hospital. You can carry on as normal, maintaining good hand hygiene. If you have any concerns, contact your GP for advice.



Do I need to tell anyone I have CPE/CPO?

Before you leave hospital, ask your doctor or nurse for a letter or card that says you have had an infection or been colonised with CPE/CPO. You should tell anyone caring for you that you have had CPE/CPO and give them the letter/card, particularly if you or a member of your household are admitted to hospital.

Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask one of the healthcare staff looking after you. You can also find out more information from:

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439822/CPE-Non-AcuteToolkit_AnnexB-individuals.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439823/CPE-Non-AcuteToolkit_AnnexC-Contacts.pdf
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/439827/CPE-Non-AcuteToolkit_AnnexD-Family.pdf

You can also contact the Infection Prevention and Control teams at our hospital sites.

King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill

Tel: **020 3299 4374**

Email: **kch-tr.KCH-IC-Nurses@nhs.uk**

Princess Royal University and Orpington hospitals, Beckenham Beacon and Queen Mary's Hospital, Sidcup

Tel: **01689 863463**

Email: **kch-tr.br-infectionpreventionandcontrol@nhs.net**



PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you.

PALS at King's College Hospital, Denmark Hill, London SE5 9RS

Tel: **020 3299 3601**

Email: **kch-tr.pals@nhs.net**

You can also contact us by using our online form at

www.kch.nhs.uk/contact/pals

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent BR6 8ND

Tel: **01689 863252**

Email: **kch-tr.palskent@nhs.net**

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact PALS on 020 3299 1844.



