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An Academic Partner of Trinity College Dublin



# CPE

Information leaflet  
for **Contacts**, their  
families and carers

COMMON  
QUESTIONS  
ANSWERED

# What is CPE



The gut of every normal, healthy human contains bacteria (bugs) called enterobacteriales which do no harm. However if these bugs get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream, they can cause infection. They **do not** cause diarrhoea, vomiting or tummy upset.

Carbapenemase-Producing Enterobacteriales (CPE) sometimes called CRE, are a particular type of these common gut bacteria that are resistant to antibiotics.

CPE have developed a resistance to a powerful group of antibiotics called carbapenems. Carbapenems are an important group of antibiotics that doctors often rely on to treat infections where treatment with other common antibiotics will not work.

However it is important to know, there are still some antibiotics that do work against CPE.

## What is a CPE Contact?

You are referred to as a **CPE Contact** if you have spent a number of hours in the same hospital space with someone who is carrying CPE in their gut. Being a **CPE Contact does not mean** that you are carrying CPE in your gut. However it does mean that the chances of you having picked it up are slightly higher than for other people.

If you are a CPE contact and come into hospital there is a note on your record. The staff may use special precautions when caring for you which may or may not include apron / gowns and gloves.

Sometimes the Hospital will only realise that you are a **CPE Contact** after your discharge. This may happen because a CPE test result from another patient who stayed in the same area as you only came back from the laboratory after you left the Hospital. If you are a **CPE Contact** we may also share this information with other hospitals.

## Should I be tested?

The advice from the HSE recommends that **CPE Contact** patients get tested only if they are in hospital or going to be admitted to hospital..

## What does testing involve?

Testing for CPE in hospital usually means taking a rectal swab (a sample taken by inserting a small swab briefly just inside the back passage). Another way to do this is to ask you to give a sample of faeces ('poo').

The testing for **CPE Contacts** may mean taking up to four samples at least one week between samples. You do not have to stay in hospital for this test. You will be screened each time you come into hospital. The samples will be tested in the laboratory. The result from each test may be ready in a day or two.

If CPE is not found in any of the samples you are no longer identified as a CPE Contact. There will no longer be any need for special infection control measures in your care when you are in the Hospital unless there are other reasons to do so.

The note can be taken off your hospital record and if you have a CPE Contact card you can give it back to the Hospital for them to dispose of or discard it yourself.



## Do I need to worry about coming into contact with others when I am at home or out in public?

No, there is no need to do anything different from anyone else as you go about your daily life. Just as for everybody else we recommend that you are careful about cleaning your hands. In relation to using the toilet it is really important that everyone leaves the toilet clean. Everyone should clean their hands before eating or preparing food.

## Should I use a separate bathroom?

There is no need for you to use a separate bathroom. Following good hand washing practice all of the time helps all of us to prevent spread of bacteria and viruses of all types, not just CPE.

### **If I test positive for CPE will I have it forever?**

CPE is a gut bug. It is a lot like other gut bugs except it is resistant to antibiotics. Once CPE settles into the gut it usually stays for a long time. If you have good health and do not need to take any antibiotics for a long time, that gives you the best chance of getting rid of CPE or at least having it shrink to very small numbers.

### **If I test positive for CPE can I take an antibiotic to get rid of it?**

No. Antibiotics will not remove CPE from your gut. Antibiotics can actually make CPE stay in the gut longer as antibiotics kill off normal gut bugs and make the gut a better home for CPE.

### **If I test positive for CPE will I become sick?**

CPE does no harm as long as it stays in the gut. CPE does not cause diarrhoea, vomiting or tummy upset.

The risk of a person carrying CPE developing a serious CPE infection is very low. For the small number of people who do develop a serious CPE infection, there are antibiotics that work and doctors use these antibiotics early if they know the patient is carrying CPE.

### **Do I need to launder my clothes separately or use different dishes/cutlery?**

There is no need to do anything different with laundry, dishes or cutlery.

### **My partner is immunocompromised- can we share the same bed?**

There is no need to sleep in separate beds. There is no need to avoid or limit physical or intimate contact.

### **If no precautions are required at home, do I have to tell anyone?**

There are special precautions that are put in place if you are in a healthcare setting. This is because there are other patients who are sick and their immunity is low, for this reason we recommend you tell any healthcare provider that you are a CPE contact. Outside of a healthcare setting it is up to you who you tell.

### **Where can I find more information?**

If you would like any further information, please speak to a member of your healthcare team and refer to our CPE positive patient information leaflet. For more information on antimicrobial resistance and healthcare acquired infection or to view CPE guidance check [www.hse.ie/hcai](http://www.hse.ie/hcai)

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at time of publication.

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