

# CPE (Carbapenemase- producing Enterobacteriaceae)

- **Do not** take partial doses (part of the prescribed amount) or stop taking any medications before finishing the whole prescription. Only change your dose or stop a medication if your health care provider tells you to.
- **Remember:** Cleaning your hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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# CPE

## What are enterobacteriaceae?

- Enterobacteriaceae are a family of bacteria in the gut (digestive system). If enterobacteriaceae move to other parts of the body (like the blood, lungs, or bladder), they can cause an infection and make you sick.
- Medications called antibiotics are used to treat infections. Carbapenems are a group of antibiotics.

## What is CPE?

- Sometimes, enterobacteriaceae cannot be destroyed by carbapenems or other antibiotics. When this happens, the bacteria are called resistant to carbapenems. They are known as carbapenemase-producing enterobacteriaceae (CPE).

## How is CPE spread?

- CPE is common in many countries, especially in health care settings. You may have a higher risk of getting CPE if you were treated in a hospital outside of Canada.

- If you have any concerns or questions, talk to your health care provider.

## How long will I have CPE?

- There is no treatment for CPE. It may go away on its own, or you may carry it for months or years.
- Even if a test shows that you no longer have CPE, you may still be on special precautions while you are in the hospital.

## Communication

- **Please tell all your health care providers that you have CPE.** This will help them:
  - › plan your care.
  - › choose the right treatment for you.
  - › prevent the bacteria from being passed to other patients.
- If your health care providers do not know that you have CPE, they may prescribe an antibiotic that is not effective. This could delay your treatment and create germs that are more resistant to certain antibiotics.

## Antibiotic use

- Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can cause antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics should only be taken if prescribed by your health care provider.

## Personal care

- **Do not** share items like towels, facecloths, toiletries, or razors.
- Cover any open cuts or draining sores with a clean bandage. Shower or bathe often.

## Caring for others

- If you have CPE, you can still care for others, including children.

## Intimacy and sex

- You can still be intimate with your partner if you have CPE. **It is important for both partners to have good personal hygiene.** If you have any questions, talk to your health care provider.

## Laundry

- You may wash your clothes with the rest of the household laundry.

## Household waste

- Put all personal care waste (like bandages or diapers) in plastic bags to put out with your regular garbage.

## Visitors

- You may have visitors. The best way to prevent spreading CPE is to practice good hand hygiene. Hugging, kissing, and shaking hands are OK.

- The most common way CPE is spread is by touching hands that are not clean. **The best way to avoid spreading CPE is to practice good hand hygiene** (clean hands well with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub).

## Screening for CPE

- **It is important for your health care providers to know if you are carrying CPE.** They will take special precautions, so it will not spread to other patients.
- Testing for CPE is simple. If you have certain risk factors when you are admitted to the hospital, your health care team will ask for a stool (poop) sample or take swab samples.
  - › The swab samples are taken with a stick that looks like a cotton swab.
  - › The samples will be sent to the lab for testing.
- Your doctor or nurse, or an Infection Prevention and Control practitioner from the hospital, will tell you if you have CPE.

## Care in the hospital

- If you have CPE, your health care team will take special precautions to keep it from spreading to other patients, like:
  - › You will have your own room, when possible. There will be a sign outside your room to tell others who enter about the special precautions.
  - › You will be asked not to use shared spaces in the hospital, including kitchens, patient lounges, and other patient rooms.

**Anyone who gives you direct care, including your loved ones and visitors, must wear a gown and gloves.** Direct care means giving hands-on care, like:

- › Bathing and washing
- › Helping you move
- › Changing clothes, bandages, or diapers
- › Caring for open wounds or lesions
- › Taking you to the toilet

**Everyone who leaves your hospital room, including you, must practice hand hygiene.**

## Care at home

- **If you have CPE when you are discharged from the hospital, the chance of spreading it to your loved ones is very small.** You do not need to change the way you live at home, at work, or in the community.

## Hand hygiene

- **It is important that you and the people you live with wash your hands often.** Use liquid hand soap instead of bar soap. Bacteria can live on bar soap.
- Using alcohol-based hand rub is another good way to clean your hands when a sink is not available. Clean your hands well after touching your genital area (like washing your genitals) and after using the toilet.
- Encourage anyone who helps you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet to wash their hands after contact with you.
- Clean your hands well before making or eating food. Everyone who lives with you should also do this.
- Clean your hands before leaving home. Carry alcohol-based hand rub or wipes with you to use when you are outside of your home.