



Patient & Family Guide  
2021

# CPE (Carbapenemase- producing Enterobacteriaceae)



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# **CPE (Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae)**

## **What are Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)?**

- Enterobacteriaceae are a family of bacteria that are naturally found in the gut (digestive system).
- Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae are bacteria that have become resistant to a group of antibiotics known as carbapenems. This means these antibiotics cannot prevent the growth of the bacteria anymore.

## **How is CPE spread?**

- The most common way CPE is spread is from direct contact (touching) between people when their hands are not cleaned after going to the bathroom, before preparing food, or before eating food.
- The best way to avoid spreading CPE is to practice good hand hygiene.

## Why is CPE a concern?

- If CPE is spread from the gut to other parts of the body (such as the blood, lungs, or bladder), it can cause an infection.
- Even though CPE rarely causes an infection in healthy people, it can be hard to treat. This is because of resistance to carbapenem antibiotics.
- Resistance to carbapenem antibiotics is a concern because these antibiotics are used to treat serious infections when other antibiotics have not worked.
- If you develop an infection caused by CPE, your doctor will give you antibiotics to fight that bacteria.
- CPE is common in many countries, especially in health care facilities. You may have a greater risk for picking up CPE if you were admitted to or received treatment in a hospital outside of Canada.

## How do I know if I have CPE?

- It is important for health care providers to know if you are a carrier of CPE. This will remind them to take special precautions so it will not spread to other patients.
- Testing for CPE is simple. You will be screened for certain risk factors when you are admitted to the hospital. If you have these risk factors, we will collect a stool specimen (poop sample) or swab samples.
- The swabs are taken with a swab stick that looks like a Q-tip®. The swab will be sent to the lab for testing.
- Your health care provider from the hospital will tell you if your result is positive.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

## Care in the hospital

If you are admitted to the hospital, it is important that special precautions are taken to keep CPE from spreading to other patients.

These precautions include:

- Having your own room, when possible
- A sign outside your room to remind others who enter about the special precautions
- You will be asked not to use shared spaces in the hospital, including kitchens, patient lounges, other patient rooms, etc.
- Gloves and a gown will be worn by anyone who provides direct care for you, including family/visitors.
  - › ‘Direct care’ means giving hands-on care, such as bathing, washing, moving, changing clothes or diapers, bandage changes, care of open wounds or lesions, and toileting.
  - › If your visitors are providing direct care, they need to wear a gown and gloves.
- **Everyone who leaves your hospital room, including you, must perform hand hygiene** (clean hands well with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub).

## Care at home

If you have CPE at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading it to your family is very small. You can live a normal life at home, at work, and in the community.

## Clean hands

- It is important that you and other people in your house wash your hands often.
- Use liquid hand soap instead of a bar of soap. This is because bacteria can live on bar soap.
- Using alcohol-based hand rub is another good way of cleaning your hands when a sink is not available. Carry alcohol-based hand rub or wipes with you to use when you are outside of your home.
- Clean your hands well after personal hygiene and after using the toilet.
- Encourage anyone who helps with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet to wash their hands after contact with you.
- Clean your hands well before preparing or eating food. Everyone in the household should also do this.
- Clean your hands before leaving home.

## **Personal care**

- Do not share items such as towels, facecloths, toiletries, and razors.
- Cover any open cuts or draining sores with a clean bandage.
- Shower or bathe regularly.

## **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. Maintaining good hygiene is important for both partners.
- If you are worried or have questions, talk to your health care provider.

## **Cleaning the house**

- No special cleaning of furniture and household items (such as dishes) is needed.
- Regular cleaning of bathroom fixtures such as faucets, taps, bathtubs, and showers with household cleaner will help lower the spread of bacteria.

## **Laundry**

- Clothing may be washed with the rest of the household laundry.

## **Household waste**

- Place all personal care waste such as bandages into plastic bags to put out with your regular garbage pickup.

## **Visitors**

- You may have visitors.
- The best way to prevent CPE is to practice good hand hygiene. Hugging, kissing, and shaking hands are OK.
- If you have any concerns or questions, please 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 even years.
- Even if your tests show that you no longer have CPE, you may continue to be on special precautions while you are in hospital.



## Communication

**Please tell all of your health care providers that you have CPE.** This will help them plan your care and choose the right treatment for you.

Otherwise, they may prescribe an antibiotic that is not effective. This could delay treatment and create a germ that is more resistant to certain antibiotics. This will also help prevent the bacteria from being passed on to other patients.

## Antibiotic use

Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can contribute to antibiotic resistance.

- Antibiotics should only be taken if prescribed by your health care provider.
- Do not take partial doses or stop taking any medications before completing the entire prescription unless your health care provider tells you to.

### **Remember:**

Washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.





### **Looking for more health information?**

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

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

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

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

*Nova Scotia Health promotes a smoke-free, vape-free, and scent-free environment.*

*Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!*

[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

*Prepared by: Infection Prevention and Control*

*Designed by: Nova Scotia Health Library Services*

The information in this brochure is for informational and educational purposes only.

The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

WC85-2234 © October 2021 Nova Scotia Health Authority

The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.