

Carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE)

DRAFT

Other formats

What does carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE) mean?

Enterobacteriaceae, also called coliforms, are bacteria that usually live harmlessly in the gut of humans. This is called 'colonisation' (a person is said to be a 'carrier'). However, if the bacteria get into the wrong place, such as the bladder or bloodstream they can cause infection. Carbapenems are one of the most powerful types of antibiotics.

Carbapenemases are enzymes (chemicals), made by some strains of these bacteria, which allow them to destroy carbapenem antibiotics and so the bacteria are said to be resistant to the antibiotics.

Why does carbapenem resistance matter?

Carbapenem antibiotics can only be given in hospital directly into the bloodstream. Until now, doctors have relied on them to successfully treat certain 'difficult' infections when other antibiotics have failed to do so. Therefore, in a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

Does carriage of CPE need to be treated?

If a person is a carrier of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae (CPE), they do not need to be treated. As mentioned, these bacteria can live harmlessly in the gut. However, if the bacteria have caused an infection then antibiotics will be required.

How is CPE spread?

If a patient in hospital is carrying these bacteria it can get into the ward environment and can also be passed on by direct contact with that particular patient. For that reason, the patient will normally be accommodated in a single room. Effective environmental cleaning and good hand hygiene by all, staff and patients, can reduce the risk of spread significantly.

Do I need to be screened?

