



St Margaret's
Hospice Care

CPE

Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae
Information for patients and visitors



What is CPE?

Enterobacteriaceae are bacteria that usually lie harmlessly in the gut of humans causing no problems. This is called 'colonisation' (a person who is a carrier). If the bacteria enters into other parts of the body e.g. bladder or bloodstream, they can cause an infection and will need to be treated.

People with a weakened immune system may be more at risk of developing an infection. CPE infections can be difficult to treat because they are resistant to a group of antibiotics called carbapenems.

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.

What 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. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

How is CPE acquired?

There is an increased risk of picking up the bacteria if you have been in hospital abroad or in the UK that have patients carrying the bacteria, or if you have been in contact with a carrier of the bacteria elsewhere.

You can also become colonised with CPE if you have been given several courses of antibiotics in the past. This is because the resistant bacteria that survive after you have completed your course of antibiotics can then grow.

Screening

At the hospice we do not routinely screen our patients.

However hospital's routinely test if you have been in hospital in a forging country in the last 12 months or you have been in hospital outside of Somerset, Exeter or Bristol. A member of the medical or nursing team will explain the screening procedure to you if screening is required.

What happens if you are positive to CPE infection?

You may have been commenced on antibiotics prior to your admission to the hospice, if you are identified as positive to CPE Infection during your admission you will be prescribed a course of antibiotics by a member of the medical team.

You should avoid touching medical devices such as urinary catheters.

How do we care for patients with CPE?

You will be cared for in a side room to ensure your treatment is managed correctly and to protect other patients.

Staff who care for you will wear gloves and aprons whilst carrying out your care. The staff will wash their hands before and after they care for you or come into contact with the environment to reduce the risk of cross contamination and prevent the spread.

Will CPE harm my family and friends?

No, CPE is not a problem to fit and healthy people, so family and friends can still visit. Visitors can reduce the possibility of spreading CPE if they do not sit or lie on your bed and they wash their hands or use the antimicrobial foam rub on entering and leaving the room.

Children and babies are vulnerable to infection, therefore it is advisable that they do not visit while you are being treated for the infection.

What happens when you go home?

While there is a chance that you may still be a carrier when you go home, if you have completed your course of antibiotics no special measures or treatment are required.

Maintaining good hand hygiene is essential.

What if you need to go back into hospital?

If you are admitted back to hospital, hospice or visit an outpatient department it is very important that you inform the staff that you have had a positive CPE test in the past 12 months.

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Publication date: Oct 2016

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Registered Charity No: 279473

