

Carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPO)

Information for patients and their visitors

OFFICIAL

What are carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPO)?

CPO are a group of bacteria (germs) that are resistant to many antibiotics, including a type of antibiotic called carbapenems. This means that these antibiotics no longer work against these bacteria, which can make infections difficult to treat.

How is CPO spread?

CPO is usually spread person to person through contact with hands or equipment with CPO on them or from contaminated environmental surfaces.

CPO is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

What happens if I have a CPO?

If a CPO is found in a specimen taken from you, your healthcare team will continue to provide the same level of care. However, the following additional precautions may be taken while you are in hospital to prevent it from spreading:

- You may be moved to a single room and a sign placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about the precautions, for example, to wear a gown and gloves.
- Everyone, including your visitors and you, should thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub before entering and leaving your room.
- An alert may be placed in your hospital record to alert staff if you are admitted another time that extra precautions may be required.

If you go to another healthcare facility or healthcare provider (for example, doctor or physiotherapist), tell them that you have a CPO. You do not need to tell other community-based facilities or businesses that are not healthcare-related (for example, public swimming pool).

Will CPO make me unwell?

In most people, CPO are harmless and do not cause infection. However, in some people, such as those with a weak immune system, it can become a serious problem. It may cause urinary tract infections, pneumonia, bladder or kidney infections, bloodstream infections, and many other types of infections.

Although healthy people do not usually get CPO infections, it is important to know that people may carry CPO in their bowel or sputum, on their skin, or in a wound without showing any symptoms. This is called colonisation.

Is there treatment for CPO?

People who are colonised with CPO are not treated with antibiotics as this can encourage it to grow again.

People who have an infection caused by CPO may require antibiotic treatment. These infections can be very difficult to treat. There are not many options for treating CPO infections as the bacteria are usually resistant to most antibiotics. While it is always better that people try to prevent getting an infection in the first place, any infections caused by CPO will be appropriately managed with advice from an infectious diseases specialist.

Will I be able to get rid of CPO?

Some people who are colonised may naturally clear the CPO.

People who are unwell with CPO infection are treated with antibiotics but this does not clear the CPO.

If I have CPO, can I have visitors?

Your family and friends can visit you; however, to prevent the spread of CPO to other patients or the environment, it is important that all your visitors do the following:

- Always perform hand hygiene before entering and leaving your room.
- Do not use your hospital bathroom.

What will happen when I go home?

There is no need to take additional precautions at home, but it is important that you and your family remember to follow these good general hygiene practices:

- Always wash your hands with soap and water:
 - after going to the toilet
 - before preparing and eating food
 - before and after touching any wounds or medical devices that you may have.
- Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
- Cover any wounds whenever possible.

No special cleaning is required in your home and your clothing may be laundered in the usual manner, along with the rest of the household laundry. All eating utensils and dishes can be washed the way you usually do.

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions, the hospital's infection prevention and control professional or the doctor or nurse looking after you or your family can help.

Disclaimer: This health information is for general purposes only. Please consult with your doctor or other health professional to make sure this information is right for you.

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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