

Carbapenem Resistant Enterobacterales (CRE)

Drug-resistant germs that spread in healthcare facilities



What are carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales?

The germs, Enterobacterales, live normally in our intestines and usually cause no problems. When they get into a part of the body where they don't belong, the Enterobacterales can cause life-threatening infections, particularly in patients with serious medical problems in hospitals and nursing homes. When these germs become resistant to strong antibiotics such as carbapenems, they are harder to treat and even more dangerous. Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales are called CRE for short.

What is colonization?

Patients can become colonized with CRE. Colonization means people carry CRE in or on their bodies but don't have any illness symptoms. Colonization with CRE can last for many months and even years. People who are colonized can still spread these germs to others.

Why are carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales a problem?

CRE can spread quickly from person to person in healthcare facilities on healthcare workers' hands, healthcare equipment, and surfaces, if they are not cleaned properly. CRE infections can be difficult to treat and even cause death. About 50% of patients with a bloodstream infection due to CRE die.

Who is more likely to get CRE infections?

CRE infections mainly affect patients who have long-term, serious medical problems. People who have spent a lot of time in healthcare facilities are at the highest risk of becoming colonized or developing an infection with CRE. Other factors that increase the risk of CRE infection include:

- Being on a mechanical ventilator (breathing machine) for a long time.
- Having tubes going into the body, such as urinary catheters, central venous catheters, and feeding or breathing tubes.

How does CRE spread to patients?

Patients with infection or colonization with CRE have the germs in their body fluids and stool that can contaminate their living space, clothing, and medical equipment. CRE can contaminate healthcare workers' hands, clothing, and other items in the healthcare environment – like doorknobs, bed rails, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs, and thermometers—and can quickly spread to other patients.

How can we prevent the spread of CRE?

To prevent the spread of CRE in healthcare facilities, healthcare workers should:

- Know how germs spread and make sure they do not carry them to other patients on their clothing, hands, or equipment.
- Wash or sanitize hands before and after caring for patients or touching items in the patient's room.

- Use the right personal protective equipment when caring for patients who can spread infections – often this includes gowns and gloves.
- Use hospital grade disinfectants for disinfecting areas and items that might have CRE germs on them and make sure that environmental services staff know how to correctly use these products
- Clean and disinfect shared equipment before and after use on a patient.

To prevent the spread of CRE in the home, you and your family should follow good general hygiene practices:

- Always clean your hands with soap and water:
 - Before preparing or eating food.
 - After using the bathroom.
 - Before and after touching any wounds or medical devices that you may have.
- Do not share personal care items like towels and washcloths with other people.
- Cover any wounds with a bandage whenever possible.
- No special cleaning is required in your home:
 - Your clothing may be washed in the usual manner, along with the rest of the household laundry.
 - All eating utensils and dishes can be washed the way you normally do.
- You do not need to take special precautions around your pets.

If you live with or have close contact with people who have indwelling medical devices, wounds, or a weakened immune system, please ask their primary medical provider for guidance, or call your [local health jurisdiction](#).

Who Should be Tested for CRE?

Public Health recommends testing patients for CRE if they may have been exposed to another person with CRE infection or colonization. The test is to see if they have the CRE germ on their body.

Should healthcare workers and family members be tested to see if they have CRE?

Public Health does not recommend testing healthy family members or healthcare workers who care for patients with CRE infection or colonization. In general, healthy people are not at risk from CRE and do not need to be tested. However, healthcare facilities may decide to screen household contacts of patients with CRE if they become ill and are admitted to a healthcare facility.



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