

Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO) **Fact Sheet for Patients and Families (Acute Care)**

How to prevent the spread of infection in hospital and home

Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO) are bacteria that can live in your gut. These bacteria do not cause infection in healthy people however they can cause an infection if they spread to other parts of the body such as the blood, lungs, or bladder.

People who develop an infection are usually already ill for other reasons. Infections caused by CPO's are difficult to treat, therefore, it is important to reduce spread of these bacteria to others.

This fact sheet explains why you may be tested for CPO, and how spread of CPO can be prevented in the hospital and at home.

Why am I being tested for CPO?

Because CPO's can cause serious infection in some people, we may test you even though you do not show signs of infection. We always test individuals if they have had any type of healthcare outside of Canada in the last 12 months. We may also test people located close to a room where a person who tested positive for CPO has been.

The screening test usually involves only a rectal swab. A small cotton swab is put into the rectum, rotated gently, and removed. The sample is sent to the laboratory for testing. It can take a few days for test results to come back.

What does it mean if my test is positive for CPO?

For most people who test positive for CPO, it means they were exposed to this microorganism and it is in their gut. Health Care Providers say this individual is 'colonized'. 'Colonized' means you do not have an infection and you are not sick.

Can CPO's be treated?

Most often these bacteria do not cause an infection and do not require treatment. If you develop an infection with a CPO, your doctor will choose the best antibiotic for your situation.

In the Hospital

If the laboratory identifies CPO from one of your samples, we will place you on isolation to prevent spread to other patients.

Isolation means:

- Nursing staff will place an isolation sign on the door of your room.
- Health Care Providers do hand hygiene and put on a gown and gloves over their clothing before entering the room to take care of you.
- Family and visitors do hand hygiene and put on a gown and gloves over their clothing before entering your room.

- We ask you to use your own toilet or commode (toilet on wheels) and wash your hands after use.
- You should not share your toilet or commode with other patients or visitors.
- Health care providers and visitors remove their gloves and gowns, and do hand hygiene every time before they leave your room.

You can help us prevent further spread through the following:

- Clean your hands often with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water, especially before and after using the toilet, before and after eating or drinking, and before exiting and entering your room.
- Do not use the patient kitchen.
- Follow the Health Care Providers instructions before they take you to other areas of the hospital for treatment and tests needed for your care.
- Follow the Health Care Providers instructions to clean your hands before walking around outside your room, and by asking where and when you may walk.

At Home:

If you have a CPO, follow these instructions to prevent CPO's from spreading to others:

- Wash your hands often, especially after going to the bathroom and before preparing and eating food.
- People who live with you should wash their hands often.
- Do not share personal care items such as washcloths, towels, toothbrushes or bar soap.
- Clean bathrooms and other frequently touched surfaces (for example, light switches, water tap and toilet handles) once per day with any household disinfectant and more often if visibly soiled.
- Wash non-disposable cleaning cloths after each use.
- Cover open draining wounds with a clean dressing/bandage.

If you have to return to the hospital:

- Tell the nurse or doctor that you are a carrier of CPO.