Carbapenem Resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)

This information explains carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE), including how it spreads and how infections are treated.

What is carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE)?

CRE is a family of germs that are difficult to treat because they have high levels of resistance to antibiotics. This means that certain treatments won’t work or may be less effective.

CRE can cause a variety of illnesses, including:

- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Pneumonia
- Blood infections
- Wound infections

What is the difference between being colonized and being infected with CRE?

A person can be either colonized or infected with CRE. If a person is colonized, it means that the germ is present on their skin or in their body, but they have no symptoms. If a person is infected, it means that the germ is present on their skin or in their body and it’s causing symptoms.
How does CRE spread?

Most CRE infections are spread by direct contact with an infected person’s bodily fluids, such as blood, drainage from a wound, urine, bowel movements (stool), or sputum (phlegm). They can also be spread by touching equipment or surfaces that have come in contact with the germ. Casual contact, such as touching or hugging, doesn’t spread CRE.

Who is at risk for a CRE infection?

You’re more likely to get a CRE infection if you:

- Are older
- Have weakened immune systems
- Have chronic illnesses, such as cancer or diabetes
- Have been treated with antibiotics in the past
- Had a recent surgery
- Have had repeated or long hospital stays
- Have open wounds or sores
- Have tubes or drains inserted in the body

What are the symptoms of a CRE infection?

Your symptoms will depend on the location and type of infection you have.

How is a CRE infection treated?

CRE infections are treated with antibiotics that are not resistant to the germ.

What isolation precautions are taken in the hospital if I have a CRE infection?

Isolation precautions are steps we take to stop infections from spreading from person to person. If you’re diagnosed with or exposed to a CRE infection while you’re in the hospital:
• You will be placed in a private room.

• A sign will be posted on your door telling all staff and visitors to clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before going into and after leaving your room.

• All staff and visitors who enter your room must wear a yellow gown and gloves. These are available outside of your room and can be disposed of inside your room.

• If you leave your room for tests, you must wear a yellow gown and gloves or be covered with a clean sheet.

• If you leave your room to walk around the unit, you must wear a yellow gown and gloves.

• You won’t be able to go to the following areas of the hospital:
  o Pantry on your unit
  o Recreation center on M15
  o Pediatric recreation areas on M9
  o Cafeteria
  o Main lobby
  o Any other public area of the hospital

• You can have art or massage therapy in your room while following isolation precautions.

Your doctor will let you know when you can stop following these precautions. This will be after you’re treated and no longer have symptoms.

What precautions should I take at home if I have a CRE infection?

Be sure to do the following at home:

• Wash your hands frequently with soap and water, especially after using the bathroom.

• Wash your hands after having contact with blood, urine, or drainage from a wound.
• Use a disinfectant, such as Clorox® or Lysol®, to wipe any surface that may have come in contact with the germ, such as your doorknob.

Where can I get more information about CRE?

If you have any questions, speak with your doctor or nurse. You can also visit the following website for more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cre/cre-patients.html

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.