

Understanding Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPOs)

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS, RESIDENTS, AND FAMILIES

What are CPOs?

CPOs are a **type of bacteria (germ) that develop ways to survive strong antibiotics** called carbapenems. That means the germs are not killed by the antibiotic and continue to grow. Because of this, CPOs can be very **hard to treat** and can **easily spread**.

CPOs may live in the gut, respiratory tract, or on the skin. These germs can cause infections in other parts of the body, especially if a person is sick or has a weak immune system.

How can CPOs spread?

- From **person-to-person** from unwashed hands.
- By touching **contaminated surfaces, medical equipment**, and the surrounding environment.
- Through **contact with bodily fluids** including stool and wound drainage.

Important to remember:

Family and visitors should wash their hands well after caring for or visiting you to decrease the chance of getting the germ.

Who is most at risk?

People are more likely to get a CPO infection if they:

- Had a recent admission to a hospital or long-term care facility or a medical procedure in a health care setting outside the U.S.
- Use medical devices like catheters (external tubes) or ventilators (breathing machines).
- Have recently taken a long course of antibiotics.
- Have an open wound, have a weakened immune system, or had a recent surgery.

Common terms associated with CPO

- Carbapenemase-producing carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (**CP-CRE**)
- *Klebsiella pneumoniae* carbapenemase (**KPC**)
- New Delhi metallo-B-lactamase (**NDM**)
- Carbapenemase-producing carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (**CP-CRAB**)

Caring for a person with a CPO

Safe care can be provided at home (or in a facility) by following these steps:



Hand hygiene is key

- Wash your hands before and after contact with the person or their medical equipment.
- Perform hand hygiene frequently. Use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Wash hands after using the bathroom and before eating or preparing food.



Use gloves when needed

- Wear disposable gloves when handling body fluids (e.g., urine, stool) or bandages.
- Dispose of gloves properly and wash your hands immediately after removal.



Daily surface cleaning and supply care

- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched often (doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, bed rails, remotes, etc.).
- Keep medical supplies in a separate, clean area.



Laundry and personal items

- Wash items such as clothes, bedding and towels separately on hottest setting available.
- Do not share personal items (toothbrush, razor, etc.).



Animals

- Do not allow pets to touch or lick any open wounds or incisions.
- Encourage hand hygiene before and after animal contact.



Visitors

- Visitors should ask the health care provider if there are any additional steps to take.

What to know about screening

You have been contacted because you may have been around a person who carries a CPO (germ that can resist most antibiotics). To prevent these germs from spreading, the health care facility or health department is asking you to take a simple screening test to check if you are carrying the germ.

Why is it important to be screened?

Even if you feel well, getting screened for a CPO is an important step in protecting both your health and the health of the people around you. These germs are resistant to many antibiotics, if they cause an infection, it can be difficult to treat.

By getting screened you can:

- **Find out early** if you're carrying the germ.
- **Prevent the spread** to others, keep these germs rare, and easier to control.
- Make sure you get the **right treatment quickly** if you do develop an infection.

Additional screening may be needed if there is a repeated exposure.

What if the screening test is positive?

Results are confidential, typically ready in a few days, and shared with your health care provider.

- Colonized people have germs in or on the body that are not currently causing illness.
- People may remain colonized with a CPO indefinitely (unknown amount of time).
- Colonized people are at **higher risk** for an infection than non-colonized people.
- If receiving medical care, providers may take extra precautions, such as wearing gowns and gloves, to prevent spread.

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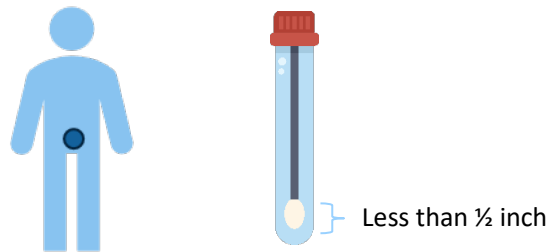
To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5414.

CPO screening process

The screening test is quick and safe. People carry different kinds of CPOs that can live in the gut or on the skin. Areas that may be screened include wounds or breathing machine sites (e.g., ventilator or tracheostomy). Swabs will be sent to a lab to test for these germs.

For Carbapenemase-producing Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CP-CRE)

The health care worker will gently insert the tip of a soft swab (less than 1/2 inch) inside the rectum, rotate, and remove.



For Carbapenemase-producing Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CP-CRAB)

The health care worker will gently collect a sample from the rectum (refer to CP-CRE section above). They may also use a swab to gently rub the armpits and groin (area where the leg meets the body).

