

If you are going to another hospital or nursing home, your nurse or doctor will let them know about your positive CRE result so that they can prevent it spreading to other patients.

### What happens when I go home?

There is no need to take special precautions at home. People in the community are usually fit and healthy so they are less likely than hospital patients to pick up CRE. Clothes, bed linen and dishes can be washed as usual. It is always very important to wash your hands carefully after using the toilet and before preparing meals or eating to stop bugs spreading to other people. Clean hands protect you and others from lots of infections, not just CRE.

### Will I get rid of CRE?

Your body may clear CRE from the bowel as you recover, but this is not always the case, and it may remain in the bowel for some time. Taking antibiotics can encourage CRE to grow in the bowel again, so they should only be taken for a very good reason. Antibiotics are available to treat CRE infection but they will not clear CRE from the bowel.

Notes:

# CRE

Carbapenem  
Resistant  
Enterobacteriaceae

### What is CRE?

CRE stands for **Carbapenem Resistant Enterobacteriaceae**. CRE are bugs (bacteria) that live in the bowel and that cannot be treated by certain antibiotics, known as carbapenem antibiotics. In most people, CRE bugs are carried in the bowel harmlessly (this is called 'colonisation') and do not cause infection. However, if a patient is prone to infection and the infection is caused by CRE, it can be difficult to treat, because many of the commonly used antibiotics will not work against CRE.

### Can CRE be harmful?

For most patients, CRE lives harmlessly in the bowel and does not cause infection ('colonisation'). This is because the person's immune system controls the CRE in the bowel and prevents it from spreading elsewhere in the body. Sometimes however, CRE can cause infection in patients, for example when they need intensive care or while receiving chemotherapy. CRE can cause infections, such as kidney infections, wound infections or in severe cases, blood infection. Antibiotics are needed to treat CRE infection. Doctors need to know as soon as possible if a patient is carrying CRE so that the most effective antibiotics can be chosen to treat the infection.

### How do people get CRE?

- Patients who have already taken lots of antibiotics are more at risk of picking up CRE. The reason for this is that the more bugs are exposed to antibiotics, the more likely they will develop 'resistance' to that antibiotic, so that antibiotic no longer works.
- CRE is more common in certain countries than others – if you have been a patient in a hospital abroad in the past year, you need to let your doctor know, especially if you are being admitted to an Irish hospital, so that they can test for CRE.
- CRE is carried by patients, healthcare staff or visitors, either harmlessly or if they are infected with it. It can spread between patients through direct contact with each other or by touching items or surfaces that the person with CRE may have touched such as bed rails, toilets or equipment. As patients in hospital are much more vulnerable to infection than patients in their own homes, special precautions are required to prevent the spread of CRE between patients in hospital.

### What are the special precautions for patients with CRE?

The precautions are designed to prevent CRE spreading between patients on the ward. If you are found to have CRE you will be cared for in an isolation room with your own toilet or commode. Staff or visitors will wear gloves and aprons before entering your isolation room and before coming into contact with you to protect their hands and clothes from CRE. Patients,

staff and visitors must pay special attention to hand hygiene. All staff must clean their hands before and after any contact with every patient, regardless of whether or not they have CRE.

### How can I help?

If you go to the doctor, dentist, another clinic, hospital or nursing home, let them know you have had a positive CRE result. They can then take special precautions to stop CRE spreading to other patients who might be more prone to getting a CRE infection.

### Why do we need to know if a patient is carrying CRE?

It is very useful to know if a patient is carrying CRE before it makes them sick. If it is known beforehand that the patient is carrying CRE then the most effective antibiotics can be chosen early to treat an infection. When staff know that a patient is carrying CRE, special precautions as outlined above, can be put in place immediately, to stop the CRE spreading to other patients, some of whom might be particularly prone to developing infection if they came into contact with CRE.

### What happens when I'm ready to leave hospital?

You can go home as soon as your doctor says you are ready, even if you have CRE. Carrying CRE will not affect your discharge.