

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

CRE leaflet information for patients
who are carrying CRE

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 you to protect

their hands and clothes from CRE. Patients,

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.