

What is Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae?

Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) are a family of bacteria that are highly resistant to a type of antibiotic called carbapenems. These antibiotics are often considered the last line (meaning strongest) of antibiotics. Resistance to these antibiotics makes treatment of infections caused by these bacteria extremely difficult to treat.

What Kind of Infections are Associated with CRE?

Infections that are associated with CRE includes:

- Pneumonia
- Urinary tract infections (UTIs)
- Wound infection
- Blood infection (Sepsis)
- Abdominal infections

How is CRE Spread?

CRE is typically spread from touching an infected person's bodily fluids (blood, drainage from a wound, urine, stool, or sputum) or from touching a contaminated surface (such as a countertop, chair, doorknob, phone). In a healthcare setting, the bacteria can spread from the hands of healthcare personnel, through contact with contaminated surfaces or improperly cleaned patient care equipment. CRE is not spread through the air or casual contact such as hugging.

Who is at Risk?

Healthy people usually do not get CRE infection. Infection often occurs to patients in hospitals, nursing homes, and other healthcare settings, those who have a weakened immune system, and/or who are taking long courses of certain antibiotics are most at risk for CRE infections. Patients who are on medical devices, such as ventilators (breathing machines), urinary (bladder) catheters, or intravenous (IV) catheters are also at a higher risk.

Can CRE be Treated?

It depends, every case is different, and treatment is dependent on which antibiotics, if any, will still work. A laboratory test is needed to find out which antibiotic, if any, will treat the infection.

What is the difference between being Colonized and being Infected with CRE?

A person can either be colonized or infected with CRE. If a person is colonized, it means that the bacteria can be

found in the gut, but the person does not feel sick and is not displaying any signs or symptoms of an illness. A colonized person does not need antibiotics for their CRE. A person who is colonized can transmit the bacteria to others if good hand washing is not followed. *If a person is infected, it means that the person is experiencing signs and symptoms of an illness.*

Can I Spread CRE to My Loved Ones?

CRE primarily affects people with an underlying medical problem(s) and/or patient who have a weakened immune system. Generally, healthy people are at low risk of developing an infection, but they may become carriers.

To prevent the spread of CRE, you and your loved ones should **wash your hands** often, especially:

- Before preparing or eating food
- Before and after changing wound dressings
- After using the restroom
- Before or after handling any medical devices
- After touching hospital surfaces such as bed rails, bedside tables, doorknobs, remote control or phone

Key Prevention Measure

Hand Washing is a simple but very effective measure to stop the spread of CRE infection.

What Precautions Should I Take at Home if I have CRE Infection?

- 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 EPA approved disinfectant to wipe any surface that may be contaminated with bacteria (such as doorknobs, remote control, phone, or kitchen counters)

Additional Information

Additional information is available at <https://nmhealth.org/hai> or by calling New Mexico Department of Health (NMDOH) at **505-827-0006**

CRE is a notifiable condition in New Mexico and should be reported to New Mexico Department of Health.

