CARBAPENEM RESISTANT ACINETOBACTER
PATIENT FACT SHEET

What is Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter?
Acinetobacter is a type of bacteria (germ) commonly found in the environment (such as in soil and water and on hospital surfaces). Sometimes these germs carry pieces of DNA that help them make something called carbapenemases, which makes them resistant to a powerful group of antibiotics called carbapenems, making them difficult to treat. This DNA can also be shared with other germs, which can also make them resistant and difficult to treat.

Who can get Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter?
Very sick patients who stay at a healthcare facility for a long time are the most likely people to become infected with Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter. These infections typically occur in patients who are on breathing machines (ventilators), have devices such as catheters, have open wounds from surgery, are in intensive care units, or have very long hospital stays. It is also possible for healthier patients to carry Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter in or on their bodies and not know it; this is called “colonization.” Colonized patients might not become sick from Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter but are able to spread these germs to other very sick patients through the healthcare environment.

What are the symptoms of Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter?
Symptoms of a Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter infection can vary depending on how and where a patient is infected. This is because there are many parts of the body that can become infected, such as the urinary tract, an open wound, or the respiratory track. People who are colonized with Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter don’t have any symptoms.

How is Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter spread?
Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter can live on the skin and in the body and may survive in the environment, such as surfaces in a hospital, for several months. It can spread from one person to another through contact with contaminated surfaces or medical equipment or through contaminated hands.

How is Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter treated?
Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter infections are generally difficult to treat due to the germ being resistant to commonly used antibiotics called carbapenems. However, if you are diagnosed then your doctor will use laboratory tests to better understand what antibiotics will work best at getting rid of your infection. There is currently no treatment for patients who are colonized with Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter.

How can people protect themselves against Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter?
Patients and caregivers should keep their hands clean by washing their hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially before and after caring for wounds or touching a medical device. Healthy people may get Carbapenem Resistant Acinetobacter on their skin but can easily wash it off with soap and water or fight it off with their immune system. It is also important to follow the precautions that are recommended when you are in a healthcare facility, and to keep the healthcare environment clean.

Where can I get more information?
Information can be found at www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/acinetobacter.html or https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/healthcare-associated-infections-hais or by emailing doh.hai@dc.gov.