CARBAPENEM-RESISTANT ENTEROBACTERALES PATIENT FACT SHEET

What Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales?

Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (also called CRE) are a type of bacteria (germ) that are resistant to a powerful group of antibiotics called carbapenems. When bacteria are resistant to an antibiotic, it means that the drug will not work to treat infections caused by those bacteria.

Many different types of Enterobacterales can develop resistance, including *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*). These bacteria can cause, bloodstream infections, urinary tract infections, wound infections, pneumonia infections and meningitis.

What is the difference between colonization and infection?

Some people have germs on or in their body, but those germs do not make them sick. These people are said to be colonized. Colonized people might not become sick from CRE but are able to spread these germs to other very sick patients through the healthcare environment.

When CRE makes someone sick, it's called an infection. This can happen if CRE germs enter the body, often through medical devices like ventilators (breathing machines), intravenous (vein) catheters, urinary (bladder) catheters, or wounds caused by injury or surgery.

Who is most likely to get a Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE) Infection?

Very sick patients who stay at a healthcare facility for a long time are the most likely people to become infected with CRE. Patients whose care requires devices (like ventilators [breathing machines], urinary [bladder] catheters, or intravenous [vein] catheters), patients who are on certain antibiotics for a long time, and patients with weakened immune systems are among those at risk for CRE infections.

What are the symptoms of Carbapenem Resistant Enterobacterales (CRE) infection?

Symptoms of a CRE infection can be different 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 CRE don't have any symptoms.

How are Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE) infections treated?

CRE infections can be hard to treat because the germ is 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. Many people with CRE will have the germ in or on their body without it producing an infection. These people are said to be colonized with CRE, and they do not need antibiotics for the CRE.

How are Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE) spread?

CRE 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, medical equipment or through contaminated hands.

How can people protect themselves against Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacterales (CRE)?

There are several ways patients can protect themselves from CRE. 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. Patients can also make sure to take any prescribed antibiotics exactly as the healthcare provider recommends. It is also important to follow instructions from medical providers 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 https://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/cre/cre-patients.html or https://dchealth.dc.gov/page/healthcare-associated-infections-hais or by emailing

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