



Learning about Carbapenemase-Producing Organisms (CPO) in the Hospital

What are carbapenemase-producing organisms (CPO)?

- CPO are a group of germs (bacteria) that are resistant to antibiotics called *carbapenems*.
- Taking certain antibiotics for long periods of time can increase the risk of getting CPO.

How does it spread?

- CPO can be found in the bowel or in wounds. Healthy people usually don't get CPO infections.
- It can be spread from person-to-person on hands and equipment that isn't properly cleaned between uses. This can happen in the community or in healthcare settings; you likely won't know where you came into contact with a CPO.

What do *colonization* and *infection* mean?

- *Colonization* – This is when the germ is found on your body but it doesn't make you sick. Some people normally have CPO in their body. In this case it's no more dangerous than any of the other germs we live with. People who are colonized with CPO are sometimes called carriers.
- *Infection* – Infection is what happens when a germ makes you sick. Some people may be at more risk for infection. Symptoms may include pain and fever. As with any other type of infection, some infections can become serious.

How is it treated?

- People who are *carriers* aren't usually treated with antibiotics. Colonization with CPO may go away without any treatment.
- People *infected* with CPO are often given antibiotics. It's very important to finish the prescription for antibiotics, even if you're feeling better.

What can I do to decrease the spread of CPO?

- Clean your hands regularly with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub (with at least 60% alcohol in it). Antibacterial soaps are **not** recommended or needed most of the time.
- Use antibiotics wisely. Antibiotic-resistant bacteria develop because antibiotics aren't used or taken properly.
 - *Antibiotics only work for bacterial infections.* They don't help for colds, the flu, or other viral infections.
 - *Take all your antibiotics, even if you feel better.* If you don't finish them, it may not cure your infection.
 - *Don't use other people's antibiotics.* Different antibiotics are meant for different types of bacteria. Using the wrong one helps the germ become resistant to the antibiotic.
- Don't share personal items (e.g., towels, clothing, bedding, bar soap, razors, or sports equipment).
- Wash clothing using regular laundry soap in the regular wash cycle.
- Clean shared items (e.g., sports equipment or surfaces like counters) with a household disinfectant.
- See a doctor for any signs of an infection.
- Cover wounds that are draining with a clean, dry dressing.

For more information:

- About Antibiotic Resistance (The Public Health Agency of Canada)
www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/amr-ram/fs-fr-eng.php
- Do Bugs Need Drugs: www.dobugsneeddrugs.org

For 24/7 nurse advice and general health information call Health Link Alberta at 1-866-408-5465 (LINK).

This content may be updated without notice.

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