



# Carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriaceae* (CRE)

## Fact Sheet

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### What is CRE?

*Enterobacteriaceae* (En-ter-o-bac-te-ri-a-ce-ae) are a family of bacteria normally found in our gut. They can also cause serious infection in the bladder, blood, wounds and lungs. Carbapenems are a group of antibiotics used to treat these types of infections. Some of these *Enterobacteriaceae* bacteria have now become resistant to carbapenem antibiotics and are now known as Carbapenem-resistant *Enterobacteriaceae*, or CRE. Infections caused by CRE result in more deaths than infections caused by bacteria not resistant to carbapenems because treatment options are limited.

### What are the symptoms of CRE?

Symptoms of CRE infection will vary depending on the site of infection (e.g. a cough if in the lungs, urinary symptoms if in the bladder). A person may also have general symptoms of infection, such as fever and chills. Some people may carry CRE but may not be sick and may have no symptoms.

### How is CRE spread?

These germs are usually spread from person to person through contact with someone who carries the germ, even if the person carrying the germ is not sick themselves. CRE can be spread from contact with infected wounds, contact with stool of a person who carries the germ in their gut, or contact with items or food contaminated by stool of a person who carries the germ.

### Who gets CRE?

Healthy people usually don't get CRE infections. CRE primarily affect patients in hospitals and long-term care facilities who are being treated for another condition. Persons with a weak immune system or who have invasive devices like tubes going into their body are at a higher risk of getting the bacteria. Prolonged use of medical devices and antibiotics can put a person at a higher risk of getting the bacteria.

Some people who have been in close contact with a person who has CRE bacteria may also get the germ.

### How is CRE diagnosed?

CRE must be identified through lab testing when a culture of a body fluid such as blood or pus grows an *Enterobacteriaceae* germ.

### How is CRE treated?

In most cases, there are a limited number of other antibiotics that can still be used to treat an infection.

### How can you prevent CRE?

Wash your hands often, especially before preparing food or eating food, before and after changing wound dressings or bandages, after using the bathroom, and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Take antibiotics only as prescribed

Expect all doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers to wash their hands with soap and water, or use an alcohol-based hand rub, before and after they examine you.

Tell your doctor if you have been hospitalized in another facility or country.

### Where can I get more information?

You can get more information by contacting the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention: Phone: 1-800-821-5821  
Email: [disease.reporting@maine.gov](mailto:disease.reporting@maine.gov),  
Information is also available on the web at <http://www.mainepublichealth.gov> or by contacting your doctor, nurse, or local health center.