

# Carbapenem resistant organisms (CRO)

Information and advice for patients

## *Infection prevention and control*

### **What are Carbapenem Resistant Organisms (CRO)?**

Everyone has bacteria that live in the bowel that are generally harmless and can even help with digestion. These bacteria are harmless because the person's immune system keeps them in check and prevents them from spreading elsewhere in the body.

However, sometimes these bacteria can become antibiotic-resistant (this is where certain antibiotics no longer work against bacteria), and in certain situations, can cause infections. Some of these bugs can develop into Carbapenem Resistant Organisms (CRO) as they have become resistant to certain powerful antibiotics, known as carbapenem antibiotics.

The majority of patients who are found to have CRO do not have symptoms and are known as carriers. Rarely, CRO can cause infection in patients (such as kidney infections, wound infections or in severe cases, blood infection), for example when they need intensive care or while receiving chemotherapy. Therefore, doctors need to find out as soon as possible if a patient is carrying CRO so that the most effective antibiotics can be given to treat any infection that develops.

### **How do people get CRO?**

- Patients who have already taken lots of antibiotics are more at risk of developing CRO. The reason for this is that the more bacteria are exposed to antibiotics, the more likely they will develop resistance.
- CRO are more common in some countries than others and are a problem in some UK hospitals.
- CRO can be carried by patients, healthcare staff or visitors to the hospital, either harmlessly or if they are infected with it. It can spread between people through direct contact with each other or by touching items or surfaces that the person with CRO may have touched such as bed rails, toilets or equipment. As patients in hospital are much more vulnerable to infection, special precautions are required to prevent the spread of CRO between them.

### **Which patients are tested for CRO?**

- CRO is a very common bug in some countries. If you have been admitted to hospital in another country in the past 12 months, you should tell your doctor or nurse so that a CRO test can be done.
- Anyone who has been an inpatient in a UK hospital (other than Sandwell and west Birmingham Hospital sites) in the last 12 months should also be screened.

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### **How is the test done?**

A swab taken from a patient's back passage is the quickest and easiest way to check for CRO, as it is usually detected in the bowel. Your nurse or doctor will take the swab and send it to the laboratory.

### **How are rectal swabs taken?**

After gaining your consent, the procedure will be carried out in strict privacy and in the presence of another member of healthcare staff:

1. You will be asked to lie on your side with your knees hugging your chest.
2. A double-headed swab will be used for the test. Your nurse or doctor will insert each end of the swab about 1 centimetre inside your back passage.
3. The swab will be put in a special sample container to send to the hospital laboratory.

In the hospital laboratory, the sample will be tested for CRO: 1 swab will be tested using a new rapid test and the other swab will be tested with standard techniques to grow the bacteria.

### **What if I refuse to have a rectal swab taken?**

This is your right and we will respect it. We will ask if you can give a sample of faeces to send to the laboratory for testing instead.

### **How long does it take for CRO results to come back from the laboratory?**

The hospital laboratory will usually be able to rule out CRO within 3 days.

### **Will I be isolated?**

- Anybody found to have CRO or waiting for a result should be nursed in an isolation room with their own toilet or commode
- You should wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the toilet and before eating and drinking.
- All Staff and visitors will need to wash their hands with soap and water before and after contact with you.
- There will be increased cleaning in your room.
- Staff caring for you will need to wear an apron and gloves.
- All visitors should see the nurse in charge before visiting you.
- Your visitors should not sit on your bed and should wash their hands before leaving your room.

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- You will stay in an isolation room until the final results are received. If you don't have CRO, you may be moved out of the room, unless there is another reason for staying in isolation. If CRO is picked up in the sample, you will stay in the isolation room for the duration of your hospital stay, to prevent spreading CRO to other patients.

### **What if I am discharged home before the results come back?**

You can go home as soon as your doctor says you are ready. You will not have to stay in hospital to wait for your result. If the result is positive, we will inform your clinical team and your result will be flagged on our system should you be readmitted and need treatment in the future.

### **Will my family need to take any precautions when I am at home?**

No the risk is to vulnerable patients in hospital. You and your family should practice good hand hygiene.

### **Contact details**

If you have any questions or concerns please speak to the doctor looking after you, your GP or the hospital. You can contact the Infection Prevention and Control team on 0121 554 3801 (ask for Infection Prevention and Control Service).

Or alternatively, please write to us at:

#### **Infection Prevention and Control Team**

City Hospital  
Dudley Road  
Birmingham  
B18 7QH

### **Further information**

More information can be found on the website of Public Health England:  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england>.

For more information about our hospitals and services please see our websites [www.swbh.nhs.uk](http://www.swbh.nhs.uk) and [www.swbhengage.com](http://www.swbhengage.com), follow us on Twitter @SWBHnhs and like us on Facebook [www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs](http://www.facebook.com/SWBHnhs).

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### Sources used for the information in this leaflet

- Public Health England, "Acute trust toolkit for the early detection, management and control of carbapenemase-producing Enterobacteriaceae" December 2013

If you would like to suggest any amendments or improvements to this leaflet please contact the communications department on 0121 507 5495 or email: [swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net](mailto:swb-tr.swbh-gm-patient-information@nhs.net)



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