

# Testing for germs resistant to carbapenem antibiotics (carbapenem-resistant organisms (CRO))

Infection Prevention

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Information for Patients

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## What are antibiotics?

Antibiotics are types of medications that destroy or slow down the growth of bacteria. Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by bacteria (but they do not work against viral or fungal infections).

## What are carbapenems and carbapenem-resistant organisms?

Carbapenems are a powerful group of antibiotics that are often used to treat infections when other antibiotics have failed.

Carbapenem-resistant organisms (CRO) are groups of bacteria (germs) that can develop a resistance to antibiotics so that they no longer work. This leaflet will tell you what happens if we think you might have CRO. It describes the tests and measures that are needed while you are in hospital.

## How do you get CRO?

CRO can be carried harmlessly in the gut of humans, so it can be difficult to say exactly how and where you got them. The majority of patients who are found to have CRO do not have symptoms and are known as carriers, or said to be 'colonised'.

Patients who have already taken lots of antibiotics are also 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.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

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.

We do know that you are at higher risk if you have been in a hospital abroad, or in a UK hospital which has had other patients with CRO.

## **Why is it important to find and treat people with CRO?**

Stopping the spread of CRO in our hospitals will make sure that powerful antibiotics continue to be available to treat severe infections in the future.

CRO can harmlessly live in the stomach of humans and animals and they help us to digest food. However, if the bacteria get into other parts of the body, for example, into the bloodstream or urinary tract, they can cause infections which are difficult to treat. This can happen if you are unwell or have a weakened immune system.

As patients in hospital are much more vulnerable to infection, special precautions are required to prevent the spread of CRO between them.

## **How do you test for CRO?**

This is done by taking a swab. A member of your care team will discuss this with you first. They will gently insert a swab a small distance into your bottom (rectum), or they may test a sample of your poo (stool). Some other samples may be needed, for example, a wound swab or urine sample. You should not experience any discomfort while samples or swabs are taken. Your privacy and dignity will be respected at all times.

All swabs and samples will be sent to the laboratory to see which bacteria grow. Your care team will tell you the results. The results can take about 1 to 3 days.

The results will show if you are carrying CRO (this is also sometimes called 'colonised') or are infected with CRO.

You may be cared for in a single room until the result of your test is known. This is to prevent the infection from spreading to other patients.

## **What if my test for CRO is negative?**

This means that you are not carrying CRO and you are not infected with any CRO. No treatment or extra care is needed. If you are in a single room, you may be moved back to the main ward area.

## **What if I test positive for CRO?**

If you test positive for CRO it means that you are carrying the bacteria in your body. You may be carrying it in your gut without any symptoms and will not need treatment or any further screening.

## What measures will be taken if I am CRO positive while in hospital?

- You will be cared for in a single room with access to your own toilet.
- Staff will wear protective equipment such as gloves and aprons to prevent the spread of the bacteria to other patients.
- It is very important that you wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after visiting the toilet and before eating (staff will help you if you need them to).
- It is very important that all healthcare staff and your visitors wash their hands with soap and water before entering and leaving your room.
- You should avoid touching medical devices, if you have any, such as intravenous drips or catheters.
- You should avoid touching any open wounds.
- If you feel unwell and experience symptoms of infection you may be given powerful antibiotics.

## Are visitors allowed?

- CRO are not a problem for fit and healthy people. Family and friends are still encouraged to visit you.
- Relatives, friends and other people who are feeling **unwell** should **not** visit you. Visitors who have had a recent infection or illness should ask the nursing staff on the ward for advice.
- **Children and babies** can pick up infections more easily. If you are visiting with children or babies please contact the ward for advice before visiting.
- Follow instructions on doors or from nursing staff before entering a room.
- Visitors can still touch you, for example, hold your hand or give you a hug.
- Visitors must wash their hands well with soap and water before entering and leaving your room; this helps prevent these bacteria from spreading to other people.

## What will happen when I leave hospital?

Your GP will be informed about your CRO positive result when you are discharged from hospital, but it should not affect you or your family at home. It is not necessary for your family members to wear aprons and gloves. The risk is to vulnerable patients in hospital.

You and your family should continue to practice good hand hygiene. Hand-washing for all is very important to prevent these bacteria spreading.

You should make sure your toilets and bathrooms are regularly cleaned with your usual household cleaning products.

Dishes, knives, forks and so on can be washed as normal.

You can wash clothes and bed linen as normal at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. If laundry is soiled, it should be washed separately at 60°C. Wash hands with soap and water after handling any dirty laundry.

You can continue with leisure and social activities as normal.

## What if I need to come back into hospital?

If you come to hospital for an appointment or any treatment, it is important that you let the staff caring for you know that you have had a positive test for CRO in the past 12 months.

This will make sure that you receive the best care to reduce the risk of you developing a CRO infection. It might be helpful to take this leaflet with you to show the clinical team.

## Preventing the spread of infection at Leicester's Hospitals

To reduce the risk of healthcare associated infections across our hospitals we have a dedicated Infection Prevention Team (0116 258 5448) and policies which are evidence based and regularly reviewed. We closely monitor infection rates across our hospitals and any risks and trends are reported to our Infection Prevention Assurance Committee, our Board of Directors and the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA).

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغةٍ أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

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