

NIH Clinical Center Patient Education Materials

Surveillance cultures for CRE

What is CRE?

CRE stands for *Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae*. *Enterobacteriaceae* (germs such as *Klebsiella* and *Enterobacter*) are found normally in our intestinal tract.

CRE can resist treatment by some antibiotics known as “carbapenems.”

These germs can live in our bodies without causing an infection (called “colonization”). They can also cause an infection that may be difficult to treat.

You can get CRE in the community or in a hospital from someone else with CRE. It is spread by close contact with an infected person, contaminated hands, or contaminated objects in your surroundings.

Important things to know

Read “Patient Information—Hand Hygiene.”

What are surveillance cultures?

- This test helps us determine whether you are colonized with CRE.
- The test (a rectal swab) will be repeated as needed when you are an inpatient or outpatient.
- A medical staff member must perform this test: you cannot perform this test yourself.

What happens if my surveillance culture is positive for CRE?

- If CRE is found, you will be put on enhanced contact isolation to prevent it from spreading to other patients. Staff will tell you about isolation requirements at that time.
- You will be on isolation until the Hospital Epidemiology Service determines that isolation is no longer needed.

How will isolation affect me, my family, and visitors?

Read “Patient Information—Enhanced Contact Isolation.”

What will my care providers do differently?

- If you are found to have CRE, you will still receive the same care and treatment when you are on isolation.
- Staff will wear gloves and a gown when they are in the room to care for you.

How will I get rid of CRE?

- If you have CRE infection, your doctors will treat it. If you are colonized with CRE it may go away without treatment.
- You can remove CRE from your hands by proper hand washing or by using alcohol hand rub. CRE on objects in your surroundings can be removed by cleaning with a disinfectant.

Be informed. Be empowered. Be prepared.

Questions?

Ask your nurse, doctor, or call the Hospital Epidemiology Service at 301-496-2209.

For more information visit the NIH Clinical Center's Patient Portal:

http://patientportal.cc.nih.gov/pt_care/patient_infection_control.shtml

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<http://www.cc.nih.gov/comments.shtml>

4/2015

