Carbapenem-resistant Enterobacteriaceae (CRE) Fact Sheet

What is CRE?
Enterobacteriaceae (En-ter-oh-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, wound and lungs. Carbapenems are a group of antibiotics used to treat these types of infections. Some of these bacteria have now become resistant to those antibiotics and are now known as Carbanpenem-resistant Enterobacteriacea, or CRE. Infections caused by CRE have a higher rate of death, due mostly to the limited treatment options available.

What are the symptoms of CRE?
Symptoms of illness vary based 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.

How is CRE spread?
These germs are usually spread from person to person through contact with someone who is sick with the germ or who carries the germ without getting sick themselves. CRE can be spread from contact with infected wounds or from contact with stool of a person who carries the germ in their gut.

Who gets CRE?
Persons with a weak immune system or patients in a hospital are at a higher risk. Prolonged use of medical devices and antibiotics can put a person at a higher risk.

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 Enterobacteriacea 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?
Clean your own 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
Information is also available on the web at http://www.mainehealth.gov or by contacting your doctor, nurse, or local health center.