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What is Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB)?

Acinetobacter infection is caused by strains of germs found widely in the environment. The most common type causing infections in humans is called *Acinetobacter baumannii*. Carbapenems are a class of antibiotics that were developed to treat bacteria that are resistant to other drugs. Because of the overuse of these antibiotics, some *Acinetobacter baumannii* have developed resistance to carbapenems and these bacteria are called Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB).

Who gets CRAB?

Healthy people usually do not get CRAB infections. In healthcare, CRAB infections might occur in patients who are being treated for other conditions. High-risk patients for CRAB infections have devices like breathing tubes or bladder and blood catheters. Also at risk are patients on long courses of certain antibiotics.

How is CRAB spread?

CRAB can spread through direct contact with an infected person. It can also spread through contaminated items, like medical equipment, and surfaces, like bed rails and doorknobs.

What does colonization mean?

Colonization means that people carry the bug but are not having any symptoms. People who carry CRAB may not realize it and can pass the germ to another person at risk. A person might be colonized for a long time before getting sick or might never get sick. So, healthcare providers should know the colonization status. They might take steps to prevent infection.

What are the symptoms of CRAB?

Acinetobacter can cause many infections. These include infections of the stomach, lungs, wounds, or blood. CRAB causes the same infections, but the infections are much harder to treat.

How soon after exposure do symptoms appear?

It is not well known how soon symptoms appear after exposure to CRAB. In most situations, exposure to CRAB does not lead to illness. The person might carry the CRAB in his or her body, but not get sick at all, or might get sick from the CRAB days or weeks later.

How are CRAB diagnosed?

We need special lab tests to identify bacteria that cause infections. They will also find which antibiotics, if any, can treat them.

What is the treatment for CRAB?

Treatment options depend on the type of CRAB infection. Some CRAB infections can be treated. But the bacteria must not be resistant to all antibiotics. If you have CRAB, your physician will work with you to figure out the best course of treatment.

What can be done to prevent the spread of CRAB?

Good infection prevention practices can limit the spread of CRAB in healthcare settings. These include wearing a gown and gloves when caring for patients with CRAB, and frequent hand hygiene by healthcare workers. Patients with CRE should follow their care providers' instructions. They should also keep their hands clean, especially after touching the affected area or using the bathroom. Visitors to a CRAB patient should follow the hospital's precautions.

What if I have CRAB?

Notify all your healthcare providers. Bring this paper if you need help remembering the name of the germ.

Follow your healthcare provider's instructions. If your provider prescribes you antibiotics, take them exactly as directed. Follow any other medical or hygiene advice your provider gives you.

Wash your hands with soap and warm water. Wash your hands when:

- Eating or preparing food.
- Before and after changing a wound dressing.
- After using the bathroom.
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water are not available. Ask and remind healthcare personnel to wash their hands.

What if I am caring for someone with CRAB at home?

Family members who are healthy have a low chance of CRAB infection. CRAB mainly affects people with many medical problems. It is a problem for those who have spent a lot of time in healthcare settings.

Family or caregivers of patients with CRAB must wash their hands before and after touching the patient or medical devices. Handwashing is crucial if the caregiver is caring for many sick people at home. Use gloves if contact with body fluids or blood is possible. Family and caregivers should ask and remind others to wash their hands.

How can I get more information about CRAB?

- If you have concerns about CRAB, contact your healthcare provider.
- Call your local health department. A directory of local health departments is located at <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/local-health-districts/>.
- Visit the Virginia Department of Health website at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/haiar/cro/>
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/acinetobacter.html>

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External link will open in new window. Click link to exit Virginia Department of Health Website.