

## Living with Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii*

This brochure is a supplement to the guidelines from your healthcare provider. Please discuss questions or concerns with your healthcare provider.

*You can help  
stop the spread  
of CRAB by  
keeping your  
hands clean.*

*Acinetobacter* is a group of bacteria commonly found in soil and water. *Acinetobacter* causes a variety of diseases – from pneumonia to serious blood or wound infections. Symptoms vary depending on the disease.

Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB) is a type of bacteria that is resistant to many antibiotics. Resistant bacteria can no longer be killed by commonly used antibiotics. This makes a CRAB infection more difficult to treat.

There are 2 ways you can have CRAB. You can be infected with CRAB or be a carrier (“colonized”).

- **Infected** — You have symptoms. The type of symptoms depends on the location of the infection.
- **Carrier** — CRAB is present on or in your body, but does not cause infection or an illness.

The most important things to do if you are living with CRAB include:

- **Good personal hygiene. This is the best way to prevent the spread of CRAB.**
- Keep your hands clean. You may use an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Always wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Clean your hands with soap and water if they are visibly soiled.
- Take care of yourself — eat right, exercise, do not smoke and avoid stress.
- Keep skin infections covered to avoid spreading CRAB to others.

### How to stop the spread of CRAB

CRAB is spread by direct contact with people who have CRAB or by touching items used by them, such as toilets, bed rails, and commodes.

The best way to stop the spread of CRAB is to keep your hands clean. Use a paper towel to dry your hands or a cloth specifically for this purpose. Clean your hands often and at these times:

- Before preparing food, eating or drinking
- Before and after touching your eyes, nose, mouth, genitals, sores, acne, boils or rashes

- Before and after blowing your nose
- After coughing or sneezing
- Before and after using the bathroom
- After touching urine, feces and body fluids, including items soiled with body fluids, such as bedding
- Before and after changing bandages
- After cleaning the bathroom, changing bedding and doing laundry
- After touching surfaces other people touch, such as phones, doorknobs or shopping carts

Other actions you can take to prevent the spread of infection include:

- Carry hand sanitizer to clean your hands if soap and water are not available
- Keep your fingernails short to keep bacteria from growing underneath
- Avoid touching, poking or squeezing sores
- Cover your nose and mouth when sneezing or coughing
- Dispose of tissues after each use
- Clean cuts or scrapes with soap and water and cover with a bandage. Seek medical care if there is redness, swelling, pain or pus
- Bathe or shower with soap daily and after playing sports or working at a gym
- Avoid sharing towels, razors, toothbrushes or other personal items
- Change your clothes every day and wash them before wearing them again
- Wash sheets and towels regularly
- Avoid contact sports, public gyms, saunas, hot tubs, pools, manicures, pedicures and massages until sores have healed
- Thoroughly clean your bathroom
- Wear gloves and wash your hands if you have handled urine or feces

## **Special precautions**

If you have CRAB, please follow these special precautions when you visit a clinic or hospital:

- Ask your healthcare providers to wash their hands before and after caring for you.
- Tell your healthcare providers if you have ever had an active CRAB infection or if you are a carrier
- If you are in a healthcare facility, you may be placed on isolation precautions. Staff may wear gowns, gloves and/or masks to care for you.
- Visitors should report to the nurses' station for directions on what to do to enter your room.

## Cleaning your home

CRAB can live on surfaces for days, weeks and months. It is important to clean surfaces often with a disinfectant. Pay attention to items that are used often, such as light switches, doorknobs, phones, toilets (including the handle), sinks, tubs, faucet handles, kitchen counters, appliance handles, cell phones, pagers and computer keyboards.

Disinfectants to use:

- Use any cleaner you can buy at the grocery store that has the word “disinfectant” on it. Remember to read the label and follow the directions.
- If a store-bought disinfectant is not available, make a solution of bleach and water. Mix 1 tablespoon bleach with 1 quart of water. Place in a spray bottle and label it “bleach solution.”
- Make a fresh solution each time you plan to clean. Over time, the solution becomes less effective as the bleach evaporates out of the water.

For your safety:

- Never mix bleach with other cleaners, especially ammonia. This can create a dangerous, toxic gas.
- Keep the bleach solution away from children, and do not put it in bottles that could be mistaken for something to drink.

If body fluids or pus get onto a surface, follow these steps:

1. Put on disposable gloves.
2. Wipe up the fluids with a paper towel.
3. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
4. Clean the surface thoroughly using disinfectant and a paper towel.
5. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
6. Wipe the surface again with the disinfectant and let it dry for at least 30 seconds.
7. Throw the paper towel in the trash.
8. Remove your gloves and throw them in the trash.
9. Wash your hands thoroughly.

## For more information

- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at [cdc.gov/hai/organisms/acinetobacter.html](https://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/acinetobacter.html)
- Contact your local health department or the Illinois Department of Public Health at 217.782.2016