

Carbapenem (car-bapen-em) Resistant *Acinetobacter* (ah-sin-EE-toe-bak-ter)

Acinetobacter is a group of bacteria commonly found in the environment (e.g., soil and water), but also within healthcare settings. While there are many different types of *Acinetobacter*, the most common cause of infections in humans is *Acinetobacter baumannii*. These bacteria may carry genes that help them resist carbapenems, a class of highly effective, last-line antibiotics that are often used to treat severe or highly resistant bacterial infections. Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB) infections are difficult to treat, and the resistance genes these organisms carry can be shared with other bacteria, facilitating the spread of antimicrobial resistance.

How is CRAB spread?

Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter* can contaminate the hands of health care providers, and can survive in the environment, such as on shared medical equipment/devices and other surfaces, for several months if not properly cleaned and disinfected. It lives on the skin and in the body of affected patients and residents, who can spread the organism to other patients, residents, and the environment despite not showing signs or symptoms. *Acinetobacter* is transmitted through touching contaminated items, surfaces, or through direct or indirect person contact.

Who is at risk?



- Patients who are very ill or compromised in healthcare settings
- Patients with prolonged hospital stays and residents of long-term care facilities
- Patients with wounds, mechanical ventilation, or other indwelling devices

How does CRAB affect patients?

Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter* can cause infections in the blood, urinary tract, wounds, lungs, and other body sites, with many types of symptoms, depending on where the bacteria are present. Healthier patients can become "colonized" with carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter*, meaning they carry it on their skin and in their bodies without knowing it or having symptoms associated with it. Colonized patients may be healthy enough to avoid invasive infection, but are still capable of spreading it to other people and the environment.

How can CRAB transmission be prevented?

Caregivers and patients can help prevent carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter* infection and spread by keeping their hands clean using alcohol-based hand rub or washing their hands with soap and water, particularly before and after touching medical equipment/devices or providing high-contact patient care. Rigorous and thorough environmental cleaning of patient rooms and shared equipment also helps reduce the risk of spreading these bacteria to vulnerable patients.

Where can I find more information?

1. <https://www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/acinetobacter.html>
2. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugresistance/biggest-threats.html#acine>
3. Or by emailing DOH.CDS.HAIAR.EPI@doh.nj.gov