

Carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii* (CRAB)

What Are CRAB Infections?

CRAB stands for carbapenem-resistant *Acinetobacter baumannii*.

Acinetobacter baumannii [ASS-ih-NEE-toh-BAK-tur BOW-man-ee-eye] are bacteria commonly found in soil and water. Although not harmful in their natural environment, when in the body, they can cause serious infection in wounds, the lungs, the urinary tract and the bloodstream.

Carbapenems [karb-eh-PEHN-ems] are a group of antibiotics used to treat serious infections. CRAB infections are highly resistant to many antibiotics, including carbapenems, making them very hard to treat.

How Are CRAB Infections Spread?

Patients and healthcare workers in hospitals, long-term care facilities, like nursing homes, and other healthcare facilities can pass CRAB to others through:

- Direct person-to-person contact via the hands.
- Touching a surface contaminated with CRAB, like doorknobs, bedrails, bedding, light switches, toilets, bedpans and bathroom fixtures.
- Using contaminated shared medical equipment, such as thermometers, stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs and IV poles.

Who Is Most Likely to Get a CRAB Infection?

Healthy people usually do not get CRAB infections. Those most at risk are people with more extended hospital stays or in long-term care facilities and:

- Are critically ill.
- Have a weakened immune system from conditions like lung disease or diabetes.

- Whose care requires devices such as breathing tubes, feeding tubes, IVs or urinary catheters.
- Have open wounds.
- Have taken certain antibiotics for a long period.

Anyone who received inpatient (overnight) medical care or underwent an invasive medical procedure outside the U.S. is also at higher risk for a CRAB infection.

How Are CRAB Infections Treated?

Bacteria that cause CRAB infections are resistant to commonly prescribed antibiotics, making them hard to treat. A person with a CRAB infection-causing illness will need to be tested to determine which antibiotics will deliver the best results.

Many people with CRAB will have the germ in or on their bodies with no symptoms or disease. This is called colonization. People who are colonized do not need antibiotics for CRAB.

If You Are Diagnosed with a CRAB Infection

While in a Healthcare Facility

Your care team will take special precautions to prevent the bacteria from spreading to other patients. For example:

- You will be placed in a private room. If a private room isn't available, you may share a room with someone who has a similar condition.
- Your caregivers will wear gloves and a protective gown when in your room.
- Visitors will be asked to wash their hands before entering and after leaving your room. They should be careful to not touch anything you touch, your bandages or medical equipment.

It's important for you to take prescribed medications as instructed and finish the entire course, even if you feel better before you run out.

When It's Time for You to Leave the Healthcare Facility

- You may leave when your doctor says you are ready, even if you have CRAB.
- Ask your healthcare provider what cleaning and disinfection product you should use on surfaces in your home treatment area.
- If you are going to another hospital or care facility, a care team member will inform them of your positive CRAB result so steps can be taken to prevent the spread to other patients.

After Going Home

- Your clothes, bed linens and dishes may be washed as usual.
- Continue to follow instructions from your healthcare provider.
- Anyone (family, friends, etc.) assisting you with high-touch care should consider wearing disposable gloves while providing care.
- Do not allow pets to touch or lick any open wounds or incisions you may have.
- In the future, if you seek care at a hospital, nursing home, wound clinic or dialysis clinic, notify the staff of your CRAB history.

Stop CRAB from Spreading

Keep Your Hands Clean

Regular hand hygiene is one of the best ways to protect yourself and others from getting sick. You can use soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if your hands are not visibly soiled.

Always wash your hands:

- Before preparing or eating food.
- After using the bathroom.
- After coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- After contact with wound drainage or other bodily fluids.
- After changing your bandages.

Caregivers should clean their hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after touching someone with CRAB or equipment in their room. Wearing medical gloves is not a substitute for practicing proper hand hygiene.



For more information, visit
[HHS.iowa.gov/hai-prevention](https://www.hhs.iowa.gov/hai-prevention)

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