Carbapenem Resistant Gram Negative Bacilli –
Fact Sheet for Patients in Acute Care

What is Carbapenem Resistant Gram Negative Bacilli?
Gram negative bacilli are one of the major types of bacteria that are present in and around our bodies. Most do us no harm however some gram negative bacteria have developed resistance to a class of antibiotics called Carbapenems. This makes treating an infection (if it does occur) difficult because of the limited choice of antibiotics available. This “carbapenem resistance” appears to be a growing problem worldwide. It is currently rare in Canada. Canadian hospitals have developed programs to identify and screen patients at risk to keep the bacteria contained.

How do people acquire this?
The most common way of passing this germ from one person to another is by contact; both direct and indirect. This means that the bacteria can be transferred from one person to another on their hands or by touching surfaces that have been contaminated with the bacteria. Patients who have been in a hospital outside Canada or in contact with a patient who has a carbapenem resistant gram negative bacteria are most at risk.

How do we prevent spreading the germ between people?
The most effective way to prevent transmission is by doing careful hand hygiene (hand washing or using alcohol based hand rub) before eating or preparing food, after using the toilet or other personal hygiene activities, before leaving your room for common/public areas and when returning to your room from public areas. Health care professionals will also wear protective clothes to reduce the chance of spreading these bacteria between patients or the environment. Do not hesitate to remind Health Care workers about their hand hygiene before they provide care.

What are the risks for patients?
For healthy people these bacteria generally do not pose a threat. For those people who are ill; these bacteria may be able to cause an infection. The problem is the choices for treatment are very limited for the resistant gram negative bacteria. Tell your primary doctor that you were told that you have Carbapenem resistant gram negative bacilli. If you return to another hospital please tell your physician or nurse as well.

What about at home?
Do not forget that bacteria are always present in and around our bodies; almost all of them are not harmful and may be useful however you should always wash your hands routinely. Always wash your hands before eating or preparing food, after using the toilet or other personal hygiene activities.

Bathe regularly with soap and water. It is best not to share personal hygiene items such as towels and washcloths. Keep your bathroom environment clean, common household detergents are perfectly acceptable cleaning agents.