

# Vancomycin-Resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE)

## Important Information for Patients and Visitors

### What is VRE? (Vancomycin-Resistant *Enterococci*)?

Enterococci are a type of bacteria that normally live in our gut. VRE have built up resistance to the antibiotic vancomycin.

### What is antibiotic resistance?

Antibiotics are medications used to treat infections caused by bacteria. When these medications are no longer able to kill the bacteria, it is called antibiotic drug resistance. Antibiotic drug resistance is a growing problem worldwide. This can happen naturally, but it can also occur because of overuse of antibiotics.

### What infection does it cause?

The most common infections are found in skin, the urinary tract and the blood stream, but they can occur anywhere in the body. You can also have VRE without having an infection. This is called colonization.

### Who gets VRE?

Most VRE infections occur in people who are in hospitals. For people who are weak or ill these infections can be serious. Patients who have open wounds, catheters, or drainage tubes and those who are very sick are most likely to get VRE.

### How is VRE spread?

VRE is spread either by direct contact with someone who has VRE or indirectly by contact with contaminated items. VRE is not carried through the air. Poor hygiene and crowded living conditions can also lead to the spread of VRE. People often carry VRE for many months even after their infection has been cured.

### How is VRE diagnosed?

VRE is diagnosed by sending a specimen to the lab for identification.

### How can I prevent the spread of VRE to others?

- Practice good hand hygiene by washing thoroughly with soap and water or by using an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR).
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors.

### How do people with VRE get rid of it?

You will not be treated if you are colonized. You will only be treated if you show signs of infection. When VRE causes an infection, the provider will treat it with antibiotics.

### What about my family and visitors?

Patient's visitors should clean their hands upon entering and leaving the room.

### Everyday tips for when you go home

#### Good hand hygiene

The key to preventing the spread of VRE is frequent and thorough hand hygiene. Everyone in the household should use ABHR or soap and water. Hand hygiene should be done before and after contact with the patient, contact with items they touched and before preparing or eating food.

#### Toileting/ Grooming

Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water after using the bathroom. The toilet should be cleaned daily with a clean cloth and disinfectant such as Lysol or bleach. Always discard the cloth used to clean when done.

#### Household cleaning/Laundry

To kill VRE on surfaces, use a household disinfectant such as Lysol or a solution of bleach. Use enough solution to completely wet the surface and allow it to air dry. This will sufficiently reduce the amount of germs. Do not share dishes, utensils or food with anyone. If you do not have a dishwasher, wash the dishes in hot, soapy water. Clothing, bed linens and towels should be washed separately in hot water with detergent and dried using the "hot" setting on the dryer.

### If you have questions or concerns please contact: Infection Prevention - 585-275-7716

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