



Infection Prevention & Control
Fact Sheet

VRE

Vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus*

What is VRE?

VRE is a type of bacteria that is resistant to an antibiotic known as Vancomycin.

Vancomycin is the antibiotic that is often used to treat enterococcus infections.

Resistance means that these germs are no longer killed by Vancomycin. This resistance is to antibiotics only, not to cleansers or disinfectants.

Enterococcus is a type of bacteria or germ that lives in the bowel or gut of 80-90% of people. Sometimes enterococcus can cause an infection in a wound, the bladder or the blood, but usually only in people who are already ill.



Colonization versus Infection

Colonization means that VRE is present on the skin of your rectal area and can live without causing illness or harm. **This does not require treatment.**

Infection means that VRE is making the person sick. A VRE infection can be treated successfully with the right antibiotic.

How did I get VRE?

Prolonged or inappropriate antibiotic use will put you more at risk for developing VRE. Being very ill or in the hospital for a long time also increases your chances of developing VRE. In hospitals and health-care facilities, it is spread from one person to another, usually on the hands of caregivers or after contact with contaminated objects or surfaces.

Can my family and friends get VRE from me?

Healthy people are usually not at risk, but these germs are able to survive on surfaces for a long time. Hand washing, good personal hygiene and care when cleaning will reduce the spread of VRE to others at home and in the community.

What Special Precautions are required for VRE?

It is important that precautions are taken to stop VRE from spreading to other patients in the hospital or residents in long term care facilities. These include:

- Single room accommodation if possible (the door can remain open).
- Gloves and gown must be worn by everyone who cares for you.
- A sign outside your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions.
- Equipment used in your daily care will remain in the room.
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands well.
- You must clean your hands with alcohol hand sanitizer or soap and water before you leave the room. A nurse will provide a clean gown or housecoat each time you leave your room.

What precautions should I take at home and in the community?

You are encouraged to participate in all recreational and social activities. If you have diarrhea, separate toilet facilities are preferred but are certainly not essential. The important thing to remember is that toilets and bathrooms should be kept clean.

- Hands must be washed after using the toilet and before preparing or eating food.
- You should bath regularly and should have your own bath towel. The bathtub should be cleaned and disinfected with a household cleaner.
- Dishes and cutlery should be washed with normal household dishwashing liquid.
- Clothes may be cleaned using the regular wash and dry cycles. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying also helps kill germs in clothes. Heavily soiled linen should be washed separately from other household laundry.
- Garbage may be disposed with regular household garbage. Regular household cleaning practices effectively removes VRE from the environment.

Will I always have VRE?

Maybe. You will be treated if you have an infection and if you remain healthy, over time the VRE which your body is carrying may disappear. Talk to your physician about planning to do a follow up test to see if the VRE continues to be present.

How can I help?

If you go to any hospital, doctor or receive Home Care, report that you are on precautions for VRE. This will allow them to check your status and use precautions to make sure they do not carry the germ to other patients.

**Remember,
good hand
hygiene is the
#1 way to
stop the
spread of VRE**



Hand washing Protocol

Hand Cleansing with Water:

- Wet hands under warm running water.
- Apply soap and rub together for at least 15 seconds, washing well between the fingers and around nails.
- Rinse well with warm running water.
- Dry with hand towel or paper towel.
- Turn the tap off using paper towel or hand towel (remember...your hands were dirty when you turned the tap on).
- Throw the paper towel in the trash. If you are using a hand towel, do not share it with other people and wash it often.

Hand Cleansing with Hand Sanitizer:

- Apply approximately 1 tsp. of sanitizer to your palm.
- Cover each area, rubbing vigorously and interlacing fingers.
- Rub for 10-15 seconds until hands are dry.
- Do not rinse off.