

Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)

What is VRE?

VRE are bacteria that live in the gastrointestinal tract of most individuals and generally do not cause harm (“colonization”). VRE are strains of enterococci that are resistant to the antibiotic vancomycin. If a person has an infection caused by VRE, such as a urinary tract infection or blood infection, it may be more difficult to treat.

How is VRE spread?

VRE is spread from person to person by contact, usually by unwashed hands or shared equipment that has not been cleaned between use. VRE can be present on hands or surfaces contaminated with feces (on a microscopic level) from the patient and/or the patient’s environment. VRE can survive for weeks on objects such as toilet seats, door handles, bedrails, furniture, stethoscopes and bedpans.

Signs and Symptoms:

VRE can cause infections of the urinary tract, the bloodstream, wounds associated with catheters or surgical procedures, or other body sites.

Some people can carry VRE in their bodies without it causing any harm or symptoms of infection. This is called colonization.

How is VRE prevented?

Proper hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risk of getting colonized or infected with VRE.

Hands should be cleaned:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- Before eating and drinking
- Before and after touching dressings or wounds
- When hands are visibly dirty (soiled)

How is VRE managed in the hospital?

Contact precautions must be taken to stop VRE from spreading to other patients in the hospital. These actions include:

- A risk assessment to determine if private room accommodation is necessary.
- Signage will be placed on your door/bed space.

Remember!

Good hand hygiene is the most important infection control practice to prevent and control the spread of microorganisms (bacteria, viruses).

Remind all staff and visitors to clean their hands before and after they touch you.

- Caregivers and visitors should clean their hands and put on a gown and gloves before entering your room or bed space.
- NO equipment should be removed from your room without being cleaned and disinfected by staff.
- Your room and equipment used in your room should be cleaned and disinfected regularly by staff.
- Your personal items should be kept to a minimum. Please use the drawers/lockers available to you. This helps our housekeepers to keep your bed space clean.
- Everyone, prior to leaving your room or bed space, should remove their gown and gloves and clean their hands.
- You must clean your hands and wear a clean patient hospital gown before you leave your room for tests.
- Prior to walking around the unit, or hospital, please speak with your nurse.

What do I need to do at home?

If you have VRE at the time of discharge from hospital, the following practices are recommended:

- Everyone who helps you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash their hands after contact with you.
- Wash your hands before you make any food and before you eat. This practice should be followed by everyone in the household.
- Wash your hands well after using the toilet.
- Clothing may be laundered in the usual manner along with the rest of the household laundry.
- No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g., dishes) in the home is required.
- If you share a bathroom at home, clean the toilet and sink at least weekly with a household cleaner/disinfectant.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have VRE. This helps prevent spread to others.

Reference:

http://www.publichealthontario.ca/en/eRepository/PIDACIPC_Annex_A_Screening_Testing_Surveillance_AROs_2013.pdf

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/vre-patients-visitors.pdf?la=en>

<https://www.york.ca/resource/vancomycin-resistant-enterococci-vre-fact-sheet>