

## ***WHAT IS VANCOMYCIN-RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCUS (VRE)?***

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Vancomycin is an antibiotic used to treat certain infections, including those caused by most strains of Enterococcus. Enterococci are bacteria found normally in the intestinal tract – they do not cause any harm. VRE are the same germs, but are strains that cannot be killed by common antibiotics.

VRE are not harmful to healthy people, but can cause infections in ill patients.

### **Colonization versus Infection**

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- Many bacteria live on and in the body without causing disease/infection. This is colonization. Colonization does not require treatment. These same bacteria under the right conditions can cause disease. This is infection.
- VRE can colonize in the large bowel. It can occasionally cause infection in the urinary tract, in surgical wounds and in the bloodstream.

### **How can VRE be spread?**

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- VRE can be spread to other people by contact between persons and/or the environment.
- People who have been in hospital, rehab facilities or long term care are more at risk of having VRE germs.

### **If I have VRE how can I keep from spreading it?**

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- **Good hand hygiene** is the single most important thing you can do, especially after using the toilet and before eating.
- Remind all staff and visitors to practice good hand hygiene before and after they enter your room. (15 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub until hands are dry).

### **What will be different about my care?**

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- Visitors and hospital staff coming in to your room will need to wear gloves and yellow gowns to prevent spread to other patients.
- Should you have to leave your room for treatment **clean your hands well** and your nurse will instruct you on what protective equipment you will need to wear.
- A sign will be placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions.

### **What do I need to do at home?**

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- VRE does not usually spread well outside of hospitals. This is because most people who are not in the hospital are healthy and not likely to become infected. Healthy people do not need to worry about getting VRE.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other health care providers that you have had VRE. This helps prevent spread to others.

### **What can I expect?**

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- We will be doing tests weekly to ensure transmission is not ongoing. We will communicate the results to you.

*\*\*We request that you, your family, and visitors not access the kitchen or visit other areas of the hospital during an outbreak.*

*We understand that some of these precautions can feel uncomfortable. Because some of our patients are very ill, we have to be very careful. We appreciate your help and patience.*

**For more information on infection prevention and control please contact:**

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