

Patient information

Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Infection Prevention and Control Team

What are Enterococci?

Enterococci are a type of bacteria that lives harmlessly in the bowel (gut) of most humans and many animals. This is known as colonisation; the term colonisation refers to the bacteria being present without causing infection. Very occasionally these bacteria can cause infection if they spread to sites outside of the bowel e.g. bladder or wounds.

What is Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

Enterococci that have become resistant to the antibiotic Vancomycin are known as Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE).

How do I know I have VRE?

VRE is detected by a laboratory test. All patients admitted to Critical Care, haematology and the Ventilation Inpatient Centre are more likely to carry VRE or develop a VRE infection and will be tested for VRE; this involves a swab of the throat and rectum.

What happens if I get VRE?

The infection prevention and control nurse will advise doctors and nurses caring for you. An assessment will be taken of your potential risk to other patient's and that you may require a side room.

What are the signs for VRE?

Most positive results are for colonisation and will not show any signs. However, the signs and symptoms of an infection are no different from any other infection e.g. raised temperature, soreness at the site of a wound and possibly swelling.

Treatment of VRE infections

People who are carrying VRE or colonised do not require treatment. Due to their resistance it is important that antibiotics are not given when there is no clinical sign of infection, as this may lead to further resistance developing.

If an infection is suspected, the doctors will assess if any antibiotics are required.

How is VRE transmitted?

VRE can be spread either directly from person to person, or indirectly through contaminated hands. Shared equipment can also spread the bacteria if not decontaminated between uses.

How is the spread of VRE prevented?

The most effective way of preventing the spread of VRE, is through hand washing with soap and water.

It may be necessary to care for patients with VRE in a single room if they have diarrhoea or leaking wounds.

Staff will wear gloves and aprons when caring for patients with VRE to prevent passing it to others.

Cleaning or decontamination of shared equipment between use e.g. BP machines.

Can I have visitors?

Yes, you can. Your visitors will need to wash their hands with soap and water when entering and leaving your room.

They are not required to wear an apron or gloves unless helping you with your care needs.

Laundry

Patients' laundry can be taken home and washed as normal.

If your own clothing does become soiled, it will be placed in a plastic bag in the locker to be taken by relatives and laundered.

Wash these clothes separately on the hottest wash suitable for the garment. Remember to wash your hands after handling soiled linen.

What should I do when I am discharged home?

Wash your hands with soap and water often, particularly after using the toilet and when preparing food.

No special measures are required with household cleaning and laundry.

Once you are discharged home there is no reason why you should not continue to join in any activity that you enjoyed before coming into hospital.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is appreciated.

Further information

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All Trust approved information is available on request in alternative formats, including other languages, easy read, large print, audio, Braille, moon and electronically.

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