

## Factsheet for Patients/Family

### What is VRE?

VRE stands for Vancomycin-resistant enterococcus. Most people have enterococcus in their bowel and it does not harm. When a person has VRE it means an infection caused by these bacteria would be harder to treat.

### What is VRE Colonization?

If you have VRE in your bowel and it is not causing an infection you are colonized. Although you are not sick because of this bacteria you could pass it on to someone else and make them sick.

### What is VRE infection?

In people with a poor immune system VRE may cause a urinary tract infection or a blood stream infection.

### How do I know if I have VRE?

Individuals who have had frequent admissions to the hospital are at a higher risk for VRE. If you have been in the hospital for more than 12 hours in the last 12 months we will take a swab. The lab reports if any VRE grew on the swab.

### How is VRE spread?

When a person has VRE the bacteria from their bowels can contaminate surfaces such as toilets, bed rails, and commode chairs. When touching these items our hands become contaminated. If we touch our mouth without washing our hands we can become colonized or infected. This is why we must use additional precautions.

### What are additional precautions?

It is very important to contain the bacteria so it does not spread to others. We do this by:  
Isolating VRE patients and putting a "Contact + Precautions" sign on the door.  
Wearing a yellow long sleeved gown and gloves when entering the room to care for the patient.  
Washing our hands before entering the room and after leaving the room.

### What about family and visitors?

Family and visitors must first talk with a nurse before coming into the room. Young visitors should be closely supervised.

All visitors must wash hands before entering the room. After leaving the room visitors must first wash hands with available waterless hand rub and then immediately visit the public bathroom to wash with soap and water.

Any visitors providing direct care for the patient (bathing, washing, toileting, dressing changes, care for open areas, and feeding) must wear a yellow long sleeved gown and gloves.

Visitors must not use the patient's bathroom.

Visitors must not visit other patients in the hospital during the same trip. This helps to ensure we do not spread the bacteria.

### What can I do to help?

Remind **all** staff caring for you to wash their hands when they enter your room and when they leave.

If you are going for tests in another department tell staff transporting you that you have VRE.

Wash your hands after you use the toilet, before you eat, after blowing your nose, after touching your dressing.

Talk to your nurse or doctor if you have any questions.

### What should I do at home?

Healthy people like your family and friends are at a low risk of getting VRE.

Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.

Pay special attention to areas that may be contaminated with feces. Use an all purpose household cleaner and follow the label.

Anyone who helps you with your personal hygiene or toileting should wash their hands after contact with you