Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Fact Sheet for residents, families, and visitors in residential care

What is VRE?
VRE stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci. Vancomycin is an antibiotic used to treat infections. Enterococcus is a type of common bacteria that lives in most people’s bowels. Some strains are resistant to Vancomycin. In rare occasions it may cause infections, usually in people who are very sick or have compromised immune systems. VRE can live on surfaces for a long time.

Can it be treated?
Treatment is usually not required. Infections from VRE are rare. If an infection does develop, there are effective antibiotics available.

How to prevent the spread of VRE?
Hand hygiene is the most important step in stopping the spread of VRE. Clean your hands with an alcohol based hand rub or use soap and water before and after meals, and before leaving your room.

If you have VRE, you may be on special precautions depending on the location of the infection. Your healthcare workers may, on occasion, need to use gowns and gloves to prevent the spread of VRE to other residents.

Everyone who provides care for you must clean their hands before and after care. If you have diarrhea, you and everyone who provides care for you or visits you should wash their hands with soap and water.

We understand that these measures may be inconvenient for you and your family, but it is important that we protect other patients from VRE. We appreciate your cooperation.

What about visitors?
Anyone who visits you should clean their hands before entering and leaving the room. They must report to the nurses’ station before entering the room if the resident is on precautions.
Your visitors will not need to wear gowns and gloves unless they are involved in your care (e.g. taking you to the toilet).

Your visitors should not visit anyone else in the facility after visiting you.

What if I am admitted hospital?
If you are ever admitted to the hospital in the future, we ask that you tell the hospital staff of your VRE history so that special precautions may be taken.

Do I need to follow any other special measures?
Be yourself. Carry on with your activities. Visiting health care providers may use gowns and gloves to prevent spread of VRE to other clients.

You can avoid spreading VRE to family members by:
- Cleaning hands before direct contact with frail family members and babies
- Cleaning your hands after using the toilet
- Using your own soap, towels, and personal care items

There are no concerns for healthy adults or children. Consult with your doctor if you have concerns about a family member who may be at high risk of developing infection.