

# VRE (Vancomycin- resistant Enterococcus)

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*ERV (Entérocoques résistants  
à la vancomycine) (FF85-1857)*



# **VRE**

## **(Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus)**

### **What is VRE?**

Enterococci (plural of enterococcus) are bacteria that are commonly found in our bowel (gut).

If enterococci travel to other parts of the body, they can cause an infection and make you sick.

Antibiotics (such as vancomycin) are medications used to treat infections.

Sometimes enterococcus bacteria become unable to be destroyed by vancomycin or other antibiotics. When this happens, the bacteria are called resistant to vancomycin, and are known as vancomycin-resistant enterococcus or enterococci (VRE).

### **How is VRE spread?**

VRE can be found in the community and in health care settings. It can also be found on people and on surfaces. VRE is mainly spread by touching unclean hands or surfaces.

### **Screening for VRE**

It is important for health care providers to know if you are a carrier of VRE. This will remind them to take special precautions, so that VRE will not spread to other patients.

Testing for VRE is simple. If you have certain risk factors when you are admitted to the hospital, a stool specimen (poop sample) or swab samples will be collected.

The swabs are taken with a swab stick similar to a Q-tip®. The swabs are sent to the lab for testing.

Your doctor, nurse, or an Infection Prevention and Control practitioner from the hospital will tell you if your result is positive.

## **Care in the hospital**

If you are admitted to the hospital, it is important that special precautions are taken to keep VRE from spreading to other patients. These precautions include:

- Having your own room, when possible
- A sign outside your room to remind others who enter about the special precautions
- You will be asked not to use shared spaces in the hospital, including kitchens, patient lounges, or other patient rooms, etc.
- Gloves and a gown will be worn by anyone who provides direct care for you, including family/visitors.
- ‘Direct care’ means giving hands-on care, such as bathing, washing, moving, changing clothes or diapers, bandage changes, care of open wounds or lesions, and toileting.

- If your visitors are providing direct care, they need to wear a gown and gloves.
- **Everyone who leaves your hospital room, including you, must perform hand hygiene** (clean hands well with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub).

## Care at home

**If you have VRE at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading it to your family is very small.**

- Use liquid hand soap instead of a bar of soap. Using alcohol-based hand rub is another good way of cleaning your hands when a sink is not available.
- Clean your hands well after personal hygiene and after using the toilet.
- Encourage anyone who helps with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet to wash their hands after contact with you.
- Clean your hands well before preparing or eating food. Everyone in the household should also do this.
- Clean your hands before leaving home.
- Carry alcohol-based hand rub or wipes with you to use when you are outside of your home.

## **Personal care**

- Do not share items such as towels, facecloths, toiletries, and razors.
- Cover any open cuts or draining sores with a clean bandage.

## **Intimacy and sex**

- You can still be intimate with your partner if you have VRE. Maintaining good hygiene is important for both partners.
- If you are worried or have questions, talk with your health care provider.

## **Cleaning the house**

- Regular household disinfectants should be used for routine cleaning of your home. Look for the word 'disinfectant' when shopping for cleaning products for the kitchen and bathroom.
- Always follow the directions on the label and use a clean cloth for each area.

## **Laundry**

Do not share used towels, facecloths, or other items. Wash clothing dirtied with bodily fluids separately from other clothing. Wash and dry clothing using the warmest temperature allowed on the label. Wear clean clothing each day, if possible.

## **Household waste**

- Place all personal care waste (such as bandages or incontinence products) in plastic bags to put out for local garbage pickup.

## **Visitors**

- You may have visitors.
- The best way to prevent spreading VRE is to practice good hand hygiene. Hugging, kissing, and shaking hands are OK.
- If you have any concerns or questions, please talk to your health care provider.

## **How long will I have VRE?**

VRE may go away on its own, or you may carry it for months or years. Even if your tests show that you no longer have VRE, you may continue to be on special precautions while you are in the hospital.

A member of the Infection Prevention and Control team will review your test results to see if special precautions are still needed. Your health care provider will decide what treatments you may need.

## Communication

**Please tell all of your health care providers that you have VRE.** This will help them plan your care and choose the right treatment for you. Otherwise, they may prescribe an antibiotic that is not effective, which could delay treatment and create more resistant germs. This will also help prevent the bacteria from being passed to other patients.

## Antibiotic use

Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can contribute to antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics should only be taken if prescribed by your health care provider. Do not take partial doses or stop taking any medications before completing the entire prescription unless your health care provider tells you to.

### Remember:

Washing your hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.



