

Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)



What is Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

VRE stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci. These are bacteria normally found in the bowel and the female genitourinary tract. They are relatively harmless, but can cause urinary tract and abdominal infections. Enterococci are normally sensitive to an antibiotic called vancomycin but some strains have developed resistance to vancomycin and are known as VRE.

What is VRE colonization?

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

What is a VRE infection?

In sick people these bacteria can cause infection. The type of infection and type of symptoms depend on which bacteria are causing it. Some VRE bacteria cause urinary tract infections, wound infections and bloodstream infections.

How do I know if I have a VRE?

At Western Health we only do routine surveillance for VRE in all ICU patients, however if you are being tested for other types of bacteria we may pick this up.

How is VRE spread?

When a person has VRE they can contaminate touched surfaces such as bed rails, toilets and commode chairs. When touching these items our hands become contaminated. If we touch our mouth or eat something without washing our hands we can become colonized or infected. This is why we use contact precautions when a patient is colonised or infected with VRE and has diarrhoea or is incontinent of faeces or has an exuding wound(s) with VRE that cannot be adequately covered or contained.

What are contact precautions?

It is very important to contain the bacteria so it does not spread to others. We do this by:

- Accommodating VRE patients in single rooms and putting a “Contact Precautions” sign outside the door.
- Wearing a long sleeved gown and gloves when providing patient care
- Cleaning 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.

What can I do to help?

- Remind all staff caring for you to clean their hands.
- 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 an infection from VRE.

- Wash your hands often, especially after using the bathroom and before preparing or eating food.
- Anyone who helps you with your personal hygiene or toileting should wash their hands after contact with you
- No special cleaning or laundry precautions are needed.

Information also available on the Western Health website www.wh.org.au

Contact the Infection Prevention Team

Footscray Hospital
Phone: 03 8345 6783

Sunshine Hospital
Phone 03 8345 0210

Williamstown & Sunbury Day Hospital
Phone 04 19 311 375

The Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights describes the rights of all people who use the Australian healthcare system. Copies of the charter in community languages are available near the main entrance of all Western Health hospitals, or ask a staff member or volunteer.

For more information, visit www.safetyandquality.gov.au/australian-charter-healthcare-rights



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