

VANCOMYCIN RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCUS (VRE)

Information Sheet for Patients and Visitors

WHAT IS VRE?

- VRE are strains of enterococci that are resistant to the antibiotic vancomycin.
- Enterococci are germs that live in the gastrointestinal tract (bowels) of most individuals and generally do not cause harm (this is called “colonization”).
- If a person has an infection caused by VRE, such as a urinary tract infection or blood infection, it may be more difficult to treat.

HOW DOES IT SPREAD?

- By direct contact, usually on the hands of caregivers either from touching contaminated material excreted by an infected person or from touching articles soiled by feces.
- VRE can survive well on hands and can survive for weeks on inanimate objects such as toilet seats, taps, door handles, bedrails, furniture and bedpans.

WHAT SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR VRE?

- VRE is easy to kill with proper use of disinfectants and good hand hygiene.
- It is important that special precautions are taken to stop VRE from spreading to other patients in the hospital. These precautions include:
 - Single room accommodation (the door can remain open).
 - A long-sleeved gown and gloves must be worn by everyone who cares for the ill person.
 - Place signage on the door to remind others about the special precautions.
 - The room and the equipment used in the room should be cleaned and disinfected regularly.
 - Everyone who leaves the room must clean their hands well.
 - The ill person must wash their hands before leaving the room.

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY/VISITORS?

- Family and visitors should not assist other patients with their personal care as this may cause the germ to spread.
- They may be required to wear a long-sleeved gown and gloves while in the room.
- Before leaving the room, visitors must remove gloves and gown and dispose of them in the garbage container and the linen hamper located in the room. Then they must clean their hands.

GOOD HAND HYGIENE PRACTICES:

- All staff and visitors need to practice good hand hygiene before and after they touch the client.
- Ask your nurse or doctor to demonstrate proper hand hygiene techniques (15 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub until hands are dry).

WHEN TO WASH HANDS:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- Before eating and drinking
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- Before you leave your room

WHAT ABOUT VRE AT HOME?

If someone has VRE at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading the germ to family members is small. But, we recommend the following household practices:

- Everyone who might help with personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash their hands after contact.
- Wash hands before making any food and before eating.
- Clothing may be laundered in the same manner as the rest of the household laundry.
- No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g. dishes) in the home is required.
- If you share a bathroom at home, clean the toilet and sink at least weekly with a germicidal cleanser.
- Always tell physicians, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have VRE. This helps prevent spread to others.

Reference: Best Practices for Infection Prevention & Control of Resistant Staphylococcus aureus and Enterococci December, 2006