



Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) Fact Sheet

What is Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

Enterococci are bacteria (germs) normally in the bowel. Most of the time they are harmless and don't cause illness. People usually are not aware of these bacteria and are completely healthy; this is known as colonization. If enterococci get 'inside' the body, (e.g., in urine, blood, or wounds), they can cause an infection. These infections can normally be treated with antibiotics (drugs used to kill bacteria). Sometimes the usual antibiotics no longer kill enterococci; this means the enterococci are resistant. This is called Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci, or VRE. VRE infections need different antibiotics for treatment.

Are Special Precautions Needed?

In the past, special precautions (known as Contact Precautions) were taken when a person with VRE received care in a health care facility. **Special precautions are no longer required for VRE.**

Why are Special Precautions No Longer Needed?

Current evidence shows the presence of VRE (i.e., colonization) rarely leads to serious infections. VRE infections can be treated with antibiotics without isolating the person.

What Measures are Necessary in a Health Care Facility?

Routine measures to prevent the spread of germs in the health care facility include:

- Practicing good hand hygiene at all times. Remind all health care workers and visitors to practice good hand hygiene before and after touching you. Clean your hands often
- Good hand hygiene practices include cleaning the hands with alcohol-based hand rub (sanitizer) or soap and water for at least 15 seconds
- Cleaning shared patient equipment between uses on different patients

Infection Prevention and Control Practices for Visitors, Families, and Friends

Family and friends can visit. They must clean their hands with soap and water, or use alcohol based hand rub (sanitizer) before entering and leaving the room, as well as when touching you (e.g., hugging, kissing and handholding).

What about When the Person with VRE Goes Home?

No special precautions are needed when at home. It is always important to follow good hygiene practices such as frequent hand washing to prevent spread of bacteria. This includes washing hands after using the bathroom or touching the nose or a wound.

How can the person with VRE help?

- Do not share personal items that contact skin such as bar soap, lotions, towels, nail files
- See a health care provider as soon as possible if an infection is suspected
- Practice good infection prevention and control at home
 - Clean hands often, before preparing food and eating, and after using the toilet (patient and family members)
 - Shower or bathe regularly
 - Do not share towels, clothes, or bed linens (if not sharing a bed)
 - Do not share grooming items such as nail scissors, tweezers, razors, toothbrushes
 - Keep sores or wounds covered if sharing a bed with someone.

*****Good hand hygiene is the best way to prevent the spread of these bacteria*****