

# Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)

## What Is VRE?

Enterococci are germs (bacteria) that live in the bowel of most people and usually do not cause harm. The antibiotic Vancomycin no longer works to treat this strain of enterococci and that is why it is called Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci or VRE. Infections caused by VRE can be more difficult to treat.

## How Is VRE Spread?

VRE is spread from one person to another by contact, usually on the hands. The spread of VRE can be stopped by good hand cleaning. VRE can also live for weeks on objects such as toilet seats, taps, door handles, bedrails, furniture and bedpans. VRE is easy to kill with the use of disinfectants.

## What Special Precautions Are Required for VRE? What Do I Need to Know?

Together we can take steps to stop the spread of VRE to other patients in the hospital:

- You will stay in a room by yourself or in a shared room with a patient who also has VRE;
- Everyone who cares for you or visits you will wear gloves and a long-sleeved gown;
- A sign for “Contact Precautions” will be placed on your door to remind everyone who enters your room about the special steps;
- Your room and the equipment used in your room will be cleaned and disinfected regularly;
- Everyone who leaves your room will clean their hands; and
- You will clean your hands and wear clean clothes or a clean hospital gown before you leave your room.

## What About My Family and Visitors?

Family and friends can still visit you in the hospital. The signs outside your room will show how to safely wear the gloves and gown. Before leaving your room, your family and visitors must remove the gloves and gown, and dispose of them in the garbage located in your room. Then, they must clean their hands with alcohol hand rub. We ask that your family and visitors not assist other patients in your room. Instead, they can assist by using the call bell to ask for help.

## What Is Good Hand Cleaning?

Our staff welcomes reminders to clean our hands. We invite you to ask anyone who enters your room to clean their hands before and after they touch you. Ask any staff member to show you good hand cleaning (15 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub for 15 seconds until hands are dry). Please clean your hands often and ask for help to clean your hands if needed:

- 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; and
- Before you leave your room.

## What Will Happen at Home?

If you have VRE when you leave the hospital, the chance of spreading the bacteria to your family is small. We recommend the following:

- Everyone who might help you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash his or her hands after contact with you.
- Clean your hands before you make any food and before you eat. Everyone in the household should follow this practice.
- Wash your hands well after using the toilet. Make sure others that use the bathroom wash their hands well afterwards.
- Clothing may be laundered in the same manner as the rest of the household laundry.
- No special cleaning of furniture or dishes is needed. VRE is killed or washed away by household disinfectant and detergents.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have VRE to stop its spread.

Questions? Infection Prevention and Control department 519-464-4400 Ext. 5253.

### Reference:

Provincial Infectious Disease Advisory Committee (PIDAC) guidelines, Annex A: Screening, Testing and Surveillance for Antibiotic-Resistant Organisms (AROs) Last Revised: March 2017