



**Good hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of *resistant micro-organisms***  
Posters showing the best way to wash your hands are available at the hand wash sinks.

**Will this prevent me from going home?**

Having *VRE* will not necessarily prevent you from going home. If you are being discharged to a nursing/residential home the hospital will inform the home of your condition prior to discharge.

**What happens if I am admitted to a hospital again in the future?**

You may be given a single room and swabs taken from your rectum and any wounds will be sent to the laboratory. If these swabs are found to be clear you may be moved into the general ward where you can mix freely with other patients.

**Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.**

**Patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.**

If you require further advice or information, please contact the Trust's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/department staff.

# **INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL**

**Proud to be clean,  
it's everyone's business!**

## **Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)**

*Information for patients  
and carers*

### **What is *Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)*?**

VRE is short for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE). Everyone has certain bacteria called enterococci that live harmlessly in their intestines or gut and genital tract. They are also found in the environment. VRE are types of Enterococcus which have become resistant to the antibiotics designed to kill them. This resistance makes infections caused by VRE more difficult to treat.

### **How did I get it?**

VRE can be found in the gut of animals fed with certain food supplements and can therefore enter the food chain and colonise humans. These bacteria can be in your body (usually the gut) but not make you unwell. This is called colonisation instead of infection as you feel well with no signs of infection. You may have had the VRE in your body before you came into hospital and been unaware of this. VRE is most commonly spread on hands. If hands come into contact with VRE and are not washed or gelled thoroughly before touching someone else, VRE bacteria can be passed to the next person.

### **How do you know I have VRE?**

A specimen was sent to the Microbiology laboratory for testing which has shown the organism.

### **Will it affect me?**

You can have VRE in your gut without being aware of it, or being affected in any way. So it may not affect you physically at all. However in some people it can cause an infection. Your treatment in hospital won't be affected by having VRE. You can go for any tests, physiotherapy or occupational therapy that you may need in other departments. Your meals will also be served as usual.

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

From patients already carrying the germ, especially if they have diarrhoea.

- On hands that have not been washed properly after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by cleaning your hands regularly and always after going to the toilet.
- On the hands of Healthcare workers who have not washed their hands properly or used the hand gel after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by asking your Healthcare worker if they have cleaned their hands.

- On the hands of visitors who have not washed or gelled their hands properly after contact with an infected patient or equipment. You can help prevent the spread of infection by asking your visitor if they have cleaned their hands
- On your hands after going to the toilet. This may be from contact with a contaminated toilet or from your own bowel if you are already carrying the VRE bacteria.

### **Can I spread it to other people?**

People in hospitals are more at risk of infection because their body defence mechanisms are weakened by illness, surgery, drugs and procedures. You may be transferred to a single room to help prevent spread. Hospital staff may wear disposable aprons and gloves while performing tasks in your room. Prevention of infections rests mainly in encouraging good hand washing practices among staff, visitors and patients and also the use of the hand rub provided in your room. Due to the different types of infections in hospitals, it is important that you do not visit patients in other parts of the ward or in other wards in the hospital.

### **Can VRE be treated?**

Treatment is not necessary in most cases. Despite being resistant to many of the normal antibiotics, treatment options are still available should infection occur. If antibiotic treatment is necessary your doctors will discuss this with you. Sometimes, VRE may clear or go away on its own although occasionally it can persist in your gut for long periods. There are no known methods which will specifically clear it from your gut.

### **Will I have to stay in hospital?**

Patients do not have to stay in hospital until the VRE is cleared. You will be sent home when your general condition allows, regardless of whether you are still positive for VRE or not.

### **Can I have visitors?**

You can have visitors but please seek advice from the nursing staff on the ward. All visitors will be asked to wash their hands with soap and water before entering and prior to leaving.

### **What about my laundry?**

Personal laundry should be bagged and kept in your room for relatives/friends to collect as soon as possible. Items should be washed separately from the rest of your families laundry in the usual way with normal detergents ideally on a hot wash (60°C or above if the material will withstand the temperature). Hands must be washed with soap and water after handling your personal soiled linen.

