

## **Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) Patient Information Leaflet**

### **What is VRE?**

VRE stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci. Enterococci are bacteria that usually live harmlessly in your gut. This is called colonisation (a person is said to be a 'carrier'). However, these bacteria can sometimes develop resistance to common antibiotics. If these resistant bacteria then move to a normally sterile part of the body, such as the bloodstream, they can cause an infection.

### **How would I know if I am a carrier of VRE?**

VRE can be carried by patients, healthcare staff or visitors. Sometimes we need to screen patients for VRE. We do this by taking a small sample from your rectum (back passage) using a cotton bud, or from a faecal (poo) sample. You will normally be informed of the result within two to three days. If you are a carrier of VRE, but have not developed an infection, you will not need to be treated.

### **How is a VRE infection treated?**

If you develop a VRE infection, the antibiotics that are used to treat VRE may need to be given in hospital directly into your bloodstream and you will require special monitoring.

### **How did I pick up VRE?**

As mentioned above, these bacteria can be found, living harmlessly, in the gut of humans and so it can be difficult to say when or where you picked it up. However, there is an increased chance of picking up these bacteria if you:

- have had a prolonged hospital stay,
- have been nursed in an intensive care unit,
- have a weakened immune system,
- have had a previous prolonged course of antibiotic treatment,
- have been in contact with a person carrying VRE.

### **How can the spread of VRE be prevented?**

VRE is spread by direct person to person contact and by contact with contaminated surfaces. It is spread more easily in patients with diarrhoea. It is not spread by coughing or sneezing. In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, the spread of resistant bacteria can cause problems.

You will be assessed by healthcare staff as to whether you need to be nursed in a single room or in a bay with others. Healthcare workers must wear aprons and gloves when caring for you. Staff must wash their hands with soap and water following glove removal.

The most important measure for you to take is to wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water, especially after going to the toilet. Inform staff immediately if you develop diarrhoea.

You should avoid touching medical devices (if you have any) such as your urinary catheter tube and your intravenous drip, particularly at the point where it is inserted into your body or skin.

Visitors must wash their hands on entering and leaving the room and will be asked to wear an apron and gloves if they are helping you with personal care.

### **What happens when I go home?**

Carrying VRE will not delay your discharge. Good personal hygiene is extremely important. Continue good hand hygiene practice at home. You should wash your hands thoroughly before preparing food or eating, and directly after using the toilet. No special measures are required with household cleaning and laundry practices.

If you are readmitted to hospital, visit a GP surgery or attend an outpatient clinic, please tell the staff that you are colonised with VRE.

If you have personal care at home, please contact your community infection prevention team for further advice

### **Where can I find more information?**

If you would like any further information please speak to a member of staff, who may also contact the infection prevention team for you.

Infection Prevention Team  
University Hospital of South Manchester  
Neil Cliffe Building  
Wythenshawe Hospital  
Southmoor Road  
Wythenshawe  
M23 9LT  
Tel: 0161 291 2630

Further information can be found on the Public Health England website:

<https://www.gov.uk/enterococcus-species-and-glycopeptide-resistant-enterococci-gre>

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