

# Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Information for patients carrying VRE

- ① If you have any questions or concerns or if you would like more information please speak to your nurse

You can also contact the  
Infection Prevention Team on 01904 725860

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# **Information about vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE)**

Enterococci is a group of bacteria that are naturally present in the gut of humans and normally cause no harm. However, sometimes enterococci can cause infections in wounds, urine and more seriously, in blood.

VRE are enterococci bacteria that are resistant to an antibiotic called vancomycin and sometimes other types of antibiotics. This means they can be more difficult to treat because some antibiotics will not work.

## **How are VRE spread?**

VRE are most commonly spread through direct contact with an infected person or indirectly from the hospital environment, for example from frequently touched surfaces such as lockers or bed tables.

As enterococci including VRE are found in the gut and passed in faeces, particular care is required if you have loose motions or devices such as urinary catheters.

**You should wash your hands with soap and water, after using the toilet and before eating and drinking.**

Good hand hygiene and a clean environment are required to prevent the spread of VRE.

# What should I expect whilst I am in hospital?

- As you have been found to carry VRE you will be nursed in a single room with toilet facilities just for you (toilet, commode or bedpan).
- Staff caring for you should wear an apron and, if potentially dealing with bodily fluids, they will also wear gloves.
- Staff will wash their hands with soap and water before leaving your side room.
- If you need to be transferred to another ward, unit or hospital, ward staff will advise them of the VRE diagnosis.
- Relatives and visitors can still visit you. They should be encouraged to use the hand gel before entering your room, and to wash their hands with soap and water before leaving your room. They do not have to wear an apron and gloves if they are just sitting and chatting with you.
- If visitors assist you with toileting they must wear gloves and an apron, and afterwards wash their hands with soap and water once they have finished.

- Your bed linen, towels and face cloths will be changed daily. Your nightwear or day clothes also need to be changed.
- Your own laundry should be washed at home. Wash the clothes separately in the washing machine on the hottest wash they will withstand.
- Your side room will be cleaned daily using a bleach based product.

## **After discharge from hospital**

- VRE do not cause infections in most people and there is a very low risk of you passing the bacteria on to anyone else. There is no need for you to change your lifestyle or avoid contact with other people.
- You should continue to practice good hand hygiene by washing your hands using water and soap especially before preparing food and after going to the toilet.
- If you have a urinary catheter or any other long-term tubes or devices and you care for these yourself make sure you know how to care for them correctly.
- Wash your clothes on the hottest wash the clothes will withstand.

# Outpatient appointments

- Please let the clinic staff know if you have an active VRE infection or any diarrhoea as soon as you arrive.
- You can sit in the waiting area, unless you have an active VRE infection or diarrhoea, in which case you should be seated in an unused clinic room.
- We will aim to schedule your appointment towards the end of the clinic list
- The staff giving direct care (e.g. examination, blood taking, wound dressing) will wear a disposable apron. They will also wear gloves if they are likely to have contact with body fluid. A conversation with you does not require either apron or gloves.
- If you require blood tests they will be taken in the clinic room rather than in the phlebotomy department.
- It is fine for you to use hospital transport for your journey to and from the hospital.

## **Tell us what you think of this leaflet**

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact:

please contact the Infection Prevention Nurses:

The York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone 01904 725860.

## **Teaching, training and research**

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

## **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)**

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email [pals@york.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@york.nhs.uk).

An answer phone is available out of hours.

# Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

Please telephone or email if you require this information in a different language or format, for example Braille, large print or audio.

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