

Patients and Relatives

**VRE**

**Information**



Patient Information

**KINGSWAY**  
DAY SURGERY

## What is VRE?

VRE is an abbreviation for vancomycin resistant Enterococcus.

Enterococcus is a bacteria (germ) that lives in the bowel / gut. It is usually harmless but if it invades another part of the body it may cause an infection and require treatment with antibiotics. In some cases the bacteria can become resistant. Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus is particular strain of this germ that has developed resistance to the antibiotic vancomycin.

## How can I tell if I have VRE?

The only way you can tell if you have VRE is if your doctor orders a sample of your blood, urine or faeces to be sent to a laboratory for testing.

## How is VRE spread?

VRE is usually spread from person-to-person by physical contact with faeces, skin (e.g. hands) or objects that are contaminated with bacteria.

## How is VRE treated?

Healthy people who carry VRE in their bodies do not need treatment. Those with serious VRE infections can be treated with special antibiotics effective against VRE.

## What precautions are taken to prevent VRE being spread?

- Staff will wash their hands immediately before and after attending the patient or use an alcohol based antibacterial hand rub
- Staff will wear gloves and disposable plastic apron when attending to the patient which will be removed and disposed of immediately after attending the patient
- The patient will be asked to limit their movement and stay in the allocated bed with the curtains drawn

- A precautionary trolley will be assigned to the patient
- The patient will be assigned their own dedicated medical equipment.
- These precautions will continue if the patient is transferred to another facility or hospital.


## What happens when I go home?

- At home continue normal hygiene practices such as washing hands before eating and especially after using the toilet
- Do not share personal items such as towels, face washers, razors and clothing.
- No special precautions are required for washing linen and clothes, cutlery and crockery or cleaning toilets, baths or showers.
- Regular cleaning of the bathroom and toilet at home using standard household cleaners is prudent.
- If you are discharged to another healthcare facility or home with a community carer it is vital they know you have VRE. This ensures they practice the appropriate precautions.

## Will I get rid of VRE?

Sometimes this germ just remains in the bowel and does not cause any harm. It does not require any specific treatment. You can be tested to determine if the VRE is still present. A negative test does not completely rule out very low numbers of germs.

## Key points to remember

- VRE does not harm healthy people including pregnant women, children and babies
  - Good hand hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of all germs.
  - Always tell the doctors and nurses that you have had VRE in the past should you require another admission to hospital.
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If you have any questions please direct them to the nursing staff or the doctor looking after you

### References

Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), USA.

[http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar\\_VRE\\_publicFAQ.html](http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_VRE_publicFAQ.html)

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/phus.asp](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/publichealth/infectious/phus.asp)

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