

## What about at home?

VRE are no more dangerous than other normal bacteria that people carry on their skin and are exposed to every day.

- Carry on with your usual activities and remind everyone to clean their hands often.
- Clean your hands before meals and after you go to the bathroom or touch your nose or a wound. Cleaning your hands should be routine, not just for VRE.
- Soiled laundry may be washed and dried in the regular cycle of your laundry to kill any bacteria.
- Bathe regularly with soap and water.
- Keep your environment clean and free of clutter. Regular household cleaners are appropriate.

## Questions?

For more information, contact your family doctor, or ask for the Infection Control Practitioner at your local facility.

| Site                     | Infection Control          |
|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Vancouver Coastal Health | 604-875-4111<br>Ext. 54002 |
| VCH Public Health        | 604-675-3900               |
| Providence Health Care   | 604-806-9357               |

# Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)

Information for Patients,  
Families & Visitors

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or email [phe@vch.ca](mailto:phe@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **FG.500.V279**

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The information in this document is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.

[www.vch.ca](http://www.vch.ca)

## Why am I receiving this pamphlet?

One of your laboratory tests shows that you are carrying an antibiotic resistant bacteria called Vancomycin resistant enterococcus (VRE).

This information sheet has been provided to help you and your family understand what VRE are and how to prevent their spread to others.

## What are enterococci?

Enterococci are bacteria (germs) found in the gastrointestinal tract (bowel) in most healthy people. They can also be found on the skin and in wounds. This is normal and is called colonization. It occurs with many other bacteria all over our bodies and does not usually cause a problem. However, in people who are already very ill, enterococci may cause an infection.

## What are VRE?

Enterococci are naturally resistant to many antibiotics, and they can become resistant to other antibiotics.

VRE are the same bacteria that normally live in the bowel, but they have become resistant to an antibiotic called Vancomycin. VRE are not easier to acquire and do not cause worse infections than other enterococci.

## How did I get VRE?

VRE have been found both in the community and the hospital setting on persons and their surroundings. They are mainly spread by contact with unclean hands.

## What will be different when I am in a health care facility?

Occasionally additional precautions are needed to protect others in the hospital who are ill and more likely to develop an infection. VRE can spread more easily with diarrhea.

- Staff, volunteers and visitors will be encouraged to clean their hands frequently, especially when they leave your room.
- Signs may be used to remind everyone to clean their hands
- Staff will discuss appropriate toileting facilities with you.
- In some cases equipment used in your daily care will remain in your room

## How can I prevent the spread of VRE?

In most situations, the spread of VRE and other bacteria can be controlled by cleaning hands often and well.

- 1. Clean your hands often.**  
Cleaning your hands will remove germs, including VRE. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer is the most effective way to clean your hands unless they are visibly dirty. When your hands are visibly dirty you need to use soap and water to remove the dirt. Cleaning your hands is particularly important after using the bathroom, before leaving your room and before eating.
- 2. Avoid touching any open sores or wounds.**
- 3. Do not share personal items.**  
This includes towels, washcloths, razors, soap, creams, lotions, cosmetics, toothbrushes, nail files, combs and brushes.
- 4. Follow your health care provider's instructions,** and tell anyone who treats you that you were known to have VRE.