

## **Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)**

### **What Is VRE?**

Enterococcus is a bacteria found in stool and the female genital area. Sometimes the Enterococcus invades specific parts of the body and causes infection. Enterococcus infections can occur anywhere in the body (for example: urinary tract, wounds or bloodstream). Vancomycin is an antibiotic that may be used to treat Enterococcus infections. If Vancomycin is unable to kill the Enterococcus bacteria, the Enterococcus is referred to as Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococcus, or “VRE.”

### **What Is The Difference Between Being A VRE Carrier And VRE Infection?**

- ✓ VRE can be present on the body without causing illness or infection. This is referred to as being a carrier.
- ✓ VRE can also make people ill and then they are referred to as being infected with VRE.
- ✓ People who are carriers or infected with VRE, can spread the bacteria to other people.

### **Who Gets VRE?**

Anyone can get VRE or develop a VRE infection.

### **How Are VRE Infections Treated?**

Infectious Disease Specialists are usually asked to order special antibiotics to treat VRE infections. People, who are carriers of VRE, do not usually require treatment with antibiotics.

### **How Is VRE Spread?**

VRE is spread:

- ✓ By hands or skin contact.
- ✓ By contact with soiled items or surfaces.

## How Is The Hospital Stay Different For Patients With VRE?

Special practices will be used to prevent the spread of VRE. These practices are called “Contact Precautions”. These precautions include:

- A private room.
- Patients with VRE need to stay in the room.
- Health care staff will wear gloves and sometimes gowns when giving care.
- Everyone needs to clean their hands before entering and leaving the patient’s room.
- Alcohol hand rubs or soap and water may be used to clean hands.
- Signs will be put on the door to remind everyone to follow “Contact Precautions”.
- Nurses will review any additional precautions with the patient.

## What Special Things Need To Be Done When A Patient With VRE Goes Home?

- Patients need to clean their hands after using the toilet and before eating.
- Family members, who help care for the patient, need to clean their hands.
- Hands can be cleaned with soap and water or with an alcohol hand rub.
- Family members need to wear disposable gloves if they handle stool or items soiled with stool.
- Clean the toilet seat after each use and other soiled items, with a disinfectant such as Lysol.
- Launder bedding and clothing soiled with stool, according to the manufacturer’s directions. Clothes and linen not soiled with stool can be washed with other items.
- Put disposable wastes (for example dressing and bandages) into plastic bags. Tie bags securely and place in regular trash.

## What Can A Patient With VRE Do To Help Prevent The Spread Of VRE?

- ✓ Patients with VRE clean their hands before eating and after use of the toilet, sneezing or touching any drainage on their body. This is the most important thing they can do. Hand cleaning choices include hand washing with soap and water or using an alcohol hand rub.
- ✓ Patients with VRE need to tell their healthcare providers that they have VRE. This information is very important so in the event the patient gets an infection, it is treated with the right kind of antibiotic. It will also decrease the risk of VRE being spread to other people.