

**What is VRE?**

VRE stands for vancomycin-resistant enterococci. It is a bacteria that cannot be treated with common antibiotics.

**How does VRE affect people?**

VRE can cause infections in people or people can become carriers of VRE. VRE can cause infections ranging from in the urine to in the blood. People with an infection can pass the bacteria more easily to other people. People can carry the bacteria in the gastrointestinal tract (gut) or female genital tract without signs of being sick. This is called colonization and these individuals are "carriers" of VRE.

**Who is at risk for VRE infections?**

Healthy people are not usually at risk for VRE infections. People with more chance of getting VRE include those that are very ill, have an open wound, have been in the hospital for long periods of time or have been given many antibiotics.

**How is the VRE spread?**

VRE is usually passed to others by direct contact with stool, urine or blood with VRE in it. VRE can also be spread indirectly by hands of care givers or contact with environmental surfaces that have VRE on them. VRE usually is not spread by casual contact such as touching or hugging. VRE is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

**What is the most important measure to prevent the spread of VRE?**

Hand washing is the most important way to prevent the spread of VRE. Proper hand washing includes rubbing your hand with soap and warm running water for at least 15 seconds, about the time it takes to sing "happy birthday" twice or the ABC song. Proper hand washing should be done after caring for sick people, after handling bandages and clothing of someone with VRE, and after going to the bathroom or changing diapers and before preparing food.

**Can a person with VRE be denied admission to a long term care facility?**

A person who is a carrier or infected with VRE should not be denied admission to a long-term care facility. VRE, along with other bacteria, may be present in any patient. If a patient who is a carrier or infected is transferred to a long term care facility, that facility should be informed in advance about the existence of VRE.

**Does a person with VRE have to be separated from healthy individuals?**

Living with a carrier of VRE presents little or no risk for other members of the household, except those who are at high-risk for VRE infection. A person with VRE infection should be seen by a health care provider before being placed with other people in a household or long-term care facility.

**How is VRE treated?**

Persons who are carriers of VRE usually do not need treatment. Persons with VRE infection can be treated with antibiotics other than vancomycin. The patient's health care provider will recommend treatment based on lab testing.