

# INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PROGRAM

INFO PATIENT

## VANCOMYCIN RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI (VRE)

### WHAT IS VRE?

VRE stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus. Vancomycin is an antibiotic used to treat infections. Enterococcus is a common bacteria that is normally found in the lower intestine. Sometimes people develop infections with this bacteria and require treatment. Only a few antibiotics can effectively treat enterococci infections, and one of them is Vancomycin. If the enterococcus bacteria develops resistance to Vancomycin, the antibiotic Vancomycin will not be able to destroy the bacteria.

### WHO GETS VRE?

People with weak immune systems, or those who have taken many antibiotics, are most likely to get VRE. It can also occur in people who have been in the hospital for a long time, or who have had many medical procedures. Recent hospitalization also increases your risk of acquiring this bacteria.

VRE is most often found in the stool, but can also be present in the urine, blood, infected wounds, other body fluids, or other sites. People may become **colonized** with VRE, which means that they are carrying the bacteria, but it is not making them sick. Other people may become **infected** with VRE, which means that the bacteria is making them sick.

### HOW IS IT TREATED?

If a patient has an infection caused by VRE, a few special antibiotics may be used to treat the infection. Often, if the patient is colonized, he or she is not treated with drugs. Patients sometimes get rid of the VRE on their own as their bodies get healthier and they are taken off antibiotics. With most patients this process takes a few months.

### CAN IT BE SPREAD?

Yes, VRE can be spread or transmitted to other people through touch. VRE is a very hardy bacteria. It can survive on regular surfaces for 5 to 7 days, and on hands for several hours. It is easy to kill, though, with proper use of disinfectants and good hand washing. This bacteria does not travel through the air.

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If you have any questions or if you would like more information, please ask your nurse or doctor to contact the Infection Prevention and Control Program.

You may also contact the City of Ottawa Public Health Department

# **PREVENTION OF TRANSMISSION IN THE HOSPITAL**

## **WHAT SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS ARE REQUIRED?**

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop the bacteria from spreading to other patients in the hospital.

- You will be placed in a private room.
- A gown and gloves must be worn by everyone who comes into your room.
- Your room and the equipment used in your room will be kept clean with a disinfectant.
- You must stay in your room at all times. If it is necessary for you to go to another part of the hospital (for example to the x-ray department), you must first wash your hands. Staff members who are involved with procedures outside your room will also wear gloves and gowns.

## **CAN FAMILY MEMBERS VISIT?**

You may have visitors. However, they must wear a gown and gloves while in your room. These will be provided by the hospital. Before leaving your room, visitors must remove the gloves and gown and dispose in the garbage container and the linen hamper located in your room. It is also very important for visitors to wash their hands for at least 15 seconds when leaving the room. Visitors should ask the nurse how to proceed if they wish to bring items into the room or remove items from the room.

## **WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW PRIOR TO DISCHARGE?**

Your nurse will review good hygiene practices with you before you go home.

If you go to the doctor's office or to the hospital, please inform them that you are a VRE carrier. This will allow the health care workers to take appropriate steps to prevent spreading the bacteria to others. If readmitted to any hospital, a single room and special precautions may be required.

# **VRE AT HOME**

## **WHAT SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS ARE REQUIRED?**

Generally speaking, people in the hospital are sicker and more susceptible to infection than people in the community. Therefore, once at home, precautions need not be as strict. Nonetheless, certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading the germ to family members and other visitors.

### **HAND CARE:**

Wash your hands for at least 15 seconds after using the toilet, before eating, or before preparing food.

Care givers should wash their hands after providing care.

Care givers should use gloves to handle stool or urine and wash hands after removing gloves. Discard disposable gloves in the regular garbage or clean rubber gloves after use.

**DISHES:** No special precautions are required.

**CLEANING YOUR HOME:** Clean bathrooms frequently. This bacteria is easily destroyed by any household cleaning product. Wet a clean cloth thoroughly with a properly diluted cleaning product. Wipe surfaces starting from the cleanest area and moving towards the dirtiest area. Let the surfaces air dry. This will allow enough contact time with the cleaning product to kill the bacteria.

**LAUNDRY:** Clothing may be washed as usual. If items are heavily soiled with body fluids (eg. urine, stool), rinse them prior to washing with detergent.

### **WASTE MANAGEMENT:**

Put all disposable waste (like dressings and bandages) into plastic bags. Tie the bags and dispose in regular garbage.

## **HOW CAN I HELP?**

When seeking medical attention, please tell your doctors and nurses that you have VRE. Appropriate steps will then be taken to avoid spreading the bacteria to others.