Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) v5

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Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Patient Information

Infection Prevention and Control Department

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What are VRE?

Enterococci are bacteria (germs) that can live harmlessly within the intestines (gut) and in some women are found in the vaginal area and urinary tract.

Occasionally enterococci can cause infections in the urinary tract, bloodstream, or wounds. These infections are often treated with an antibiotic called Vancomycin (a strong antibiotic used to treat complicated infections); however, when enterococci are exposed to Vancomycin, they sometimes develop ways to stop the antibiotic working (resistance) and alternative antibiotics are required.

Will I be tested for VRE in hospital?

As VRE can live in your body without causing any problems, you will not routinely be tested for VRE. It may, however, be picked up during other routine testing whilst you are in hospital.

What will happen if I am found to have VRE?

This will depend on several things:

- If you are considered colonised (carrying) with the bacteria or have a VRE infection.
- The area within the hospital where you are being cared for and your symptoms.

Staff will discuss these with you at the time of the result and you may if necessary be cared for in a single room.

Who is at risk of infection caused by VRE?

People that have an increased risk of VRE infection are:

- Those who have been in hospital for a long period of time
- Those with a weakened immune system
- People who have undergone surgery
- Those who have had medical devices (catheters and tubes) in place for a long time
- People who have previously been treated with antibiotics

How is VRE treated?

If you are colonised with VRE no treatment is required. If you have a VRE infection, antibiotics other than Vancomycin will be prescribed for you.

What can I do to prevent spread of VRE?

Hand washing with soap and water or using alcohol gel is the most important way to prevent the spread of VRE.

What happens when I am discharged from hospital?

There is no need to take special precautions when you are discharged home. Clothes, bed linen and crockery and cutlery can be washed as normal. It is important to continue to wash your hands thoroughly, particularly after going to the toilet or before preparing and eating food.

Will I always have VRE?

Your body may clear itself of VRE as you recover; however, this is not always the case, and it may remain in the gut for some time. Taking antibiotics encourages VRE to grow in the gut again so should only be taken for a very good reason. VRE rarely causes problems in fit and well people.

Who can I contact for further information?

If you have any questions or would like further information about VRE, please do not hesitate to contact a member of staff whilst in hospital or your GP once discharged home.



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