

## What can people with VRE do to protect their visitors or family members?

If you have VRE at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading it to your healthy family or friends is low. It is acceptable for infants and children to have casual contact with people with VRE.

### **If you have VRE it is recommended that you practice the following at home:**

- √ Wash your hands when they are dirty, before and after eating or drinking, and after using the toilet or blowing your nose. Encourage everyone in their house to clean their hands at these times.
- √ Avoid touching open wounds on your body. If you must change a dressing make sure you clean your hands before and after.
- √ Everyone who might help you with your personal hygiene, or with going to the toilet, should wash their hands after contact with you.
- √ Towels for drying hands after contact should be used only once.
- √ Do not share towels or personal care items, such as toothbrushes, washcloths or razors with other family members.
- √ Clothing may be laundered in the same manner as the rest of the household laundry.
- √ No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g. dishes) in the home is required. VRE, as well as many other bacteria, are killed by regular household cleaners and disinfectants.
- √ Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have VRE, so that they can take additional precautions to help prevent spread.

*Hand hygiene decreases the risk of spreading infection. Remind everyone to wash their hands often.*



 **CHATHAM-KENT**  
*Health Alliance*

80 Grand Ave.  
P.O. Box 2030  
Chatham, ON  
N7M 5L9

Phone: 519-352-6400 ext. 5093/5257  
E-mail: [\\_InfectionControl@ckha.on.ca](mailto:_InfectionControl@ckha.on.ca)

## Patient Information

 **CHATHAM-KENT**  
*Health Alliance*

## VANCOMYCIN RESISTANT ENTEROCOCCI (VRE)

“Together we will provide safe, quality patient and family-centered care.”  
Chatham-Kent Health Alliance

Phone 519-352-6400  
Sheila at ext. 5093  
Erika at ext. 5257  
Carol at ext. 6481

## What is VRE?

*Enterococcus* is a germ that lives in the gastrointestinal (GI) tract of healthy people. Occasionally *Enterococcus* can cause an infection. Vancomycin-Resistant *Enterococcus*, or VRE is a strain of *Enterococcus* that has developed resistance to multiple antibiotics. VRE can be detected in the stool or rectal area of healthy individuals.

### Colonization vs. Infection

**Colonization** is when VRE is living in your GI tract but not making you sick. You cannot tell when someone is colonized—that's why it is important to test the stool or rectal area for VRE when you are admitted to the hospital. If stool or rectal swab grow VRE, then that means you are colonized. Sometimes VRE can go away on its own, but there is currently no treatment for colonization available.

**Infection** is when bacteria get past a person's defenses and cause disease, such as a urinary tract infection, wound infection or pneumonia. The *signs and symptoms* of infection include *fever, pus-like drainage, redness, swelling, and pain*. Infections caused by VRE are very difficult to treat due to a very limited number of antibiotics that can be used. Fortunately, infections caused by VRE are not very common.

**Colonization does not require treatment.**

**Infection DOES.**

## The following people are at the greatest risk of having VRE:

- People that have had VRE previously
- Hospital stay in the last 12 months
- Spent time in a Healthcare facility or long term care facility
- Recent exposure to another person with VRE
- Recent exposure to certain antibiotics (cephalosporins and vancomycin)

### What Special Precautions are required for VRE?

If you are found to be a carrier of VRE, it is important that **CONTACT PRECAUTIONS** are taken to stop the VRE from spreading to other patients in the hospital, or to other areas on you (e.g. surgical site). These precautions include:

- ✓ A gown and gloves must be worn by everyone who provides **direct care** to you, **including visitors or family members**.
- ✓ You will be required to have clean hands and clean clothing or hospital gown prior to leaving your room for treatment or therapy.
- ✓ While in the hospital you must comply with the hospital's Routine Practice in order to protect yourself and other patients.
- ✓ If you develop **diarrhea** you may be required to stay in your room until it goes away. VRE patients who have diarrhea can spread VRE more easily to other patients. VRE does not cause diarrhea.



## How is VRE Spread?

VRE is spread by **DIRECT CONTACT** from touching a patient colonized or infected with VRE or **INDIRECTLY** by touching things in their environment.

**Hands are the most common source of transmission.**

**All healthcare facilities in Ontario are equipped to handle patients with VRE.**



### Good hand hygiene practices:

Remind all staff and visitors to practice good hand hygiene before and after they touch you. 15 seconds of soap and running water OR alcohol based hand rub until hands are dry is enough to be effective.

*It is very important for you to wash your hands too!*



More information about infection prevention and control practices in the hospital is available. Ask your healthcare provider.