



**Countess of
Chester Hospital**
NHS Foundation Trust

VRE

**Information for patients,
staff and relatives**

A large graphic at the bottom of the page. It features a dark blue circular background with the letters 'VRE' in a white, bubbly, textured font. The circle is surrounded by several overlapping, curved lines in yellow, green, and red, creating a colorful, abstract border.

VRE

What is VRE?

VRE stands for Vancomycin (V) Resistant (R) Enterococci (E). Enterococci are bacteria that are commonly found in the bowels of most humans and under normal circumstances cause no problems. There are many different types but only a few have the potential to cause infections in humans. More than 95% of enterococci infections are caused by just two species: *Enterococcus faecium* and *Enterococcus faecalis*. VRE does not respond to the common antibiotics usually used to treat these infections. However, there are a small number of antibiotics that may be used if infections develop.

How do people contract VRE?

It is not fully understood how some people contract VRE. One possibility is that use of certain antibiotics in the past may have changed the germs that normally live in the bowel and have supported the growth of VRE. Another way in which people may contract VRE is when it is passed from one person who has VRE to another who also becomes colonised.

How do you stop VRE spreading?

The main ways to prevent VRE from spreading are:

- Caring for patients with VRE in a single room or in a bay with other patients who have VRE.
- Staff using gloves and aprons when providing close personal care.
- Thorough cleaning and disinfection of the ward environment, toilet, commode and other equipment.
- Regular changing and washing of linen, clothing and towels.
- Where possible, individual toilet facilities or commode for anyone with VRE.
- Thorough hand washing using soap and water, especially

after using the toilet; after helping someone else use the toilet; before serving food or eating and after cleaning the environment.

What illnesses can VRE cause?

The majority of people who have VRE do not become unwell; they simply 'carry' the bacteria harmlessly within their bowel. However, VRE can cause infections such as wound and urinary tract infections, sepsis or abdominal infections.

Are some people more at risk than others?

Infections caused by VRE mainly occur in people who are already seriously ill with other health problems, so their immune systems are weak. They may have had prolonged treatment with antibiotics or been nursed in specialist units such as intensive care or renal units. However, VRE are sometimes found in the faeces of people who have never been in hospital or had recent antibiotics.

How do I find out if I have VRE?

It is usually found when a sample – such as blood, urine or a wound swab - is sent to the laboratory for routine testing. If VRE is found in a part of the body that does not normally have enterococci, we will collect a stool sample or a rectal swab to see if you have VRE living in your bowel. This stool sample or rectal swab is known as a VRE screen and identifies colonisation not infection. There are some specialist areas of the hospital where patients may be routinely screened if they are admitted there.

Can VRE be treated?

Yes infections caused by VRE can be treated with antibiotics. If VRE is living harmlessly in your bowel you do not need to be treated for it. If you have a VRE infection you will be treated with antibiotics.

If I have VRE what will happen to me?

If you have been told that you have VRE it doesn't automatically mean you are infected so there's no need to be alarmed.

There are some extra precautions that we will take to protect you and other people while you are in hospital.

- You may be moved to a single room if one is available.
- If no single room is available you may be nursed in a bay with other patients who are known to have VRE.
- You may need to be treated with antibiotics if you develop a VRE related infection.
- The area around your bed will be cleaned every day using disinfectant.
- It is always important that you thoroughly wash your hands after using the toilet or before eating.
- Try to avoid putting your fingers in your mouth.
- It is advisable to change your clothing daily.

Staff must be very careful about doing things like changing dressings or making beds and may need to use aprons and gloves even for simple tasks.

What about my family?

We all have our own germs that live on our bodies and stop other people's germs from gaining a foothold. So VRE does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. You can continue to have normal social contact such as shaking hands and even kissing with your friends and family.

We ask that visitors who are unwell themselves do not visit you until they are better. Visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons but they must wash their hands with soap and water or use the hand hygiene rub before and after visiting anyone in hospital. If your visitors are visiting someone else in a different part of the hospital it is important that they visit you last.

Can VRE come back?

Yes, so if you need to come back into hospital you will be screened again and may be cared for in a single room until we are reassured that the VRE has gone.

Will I have to stay in hospital longer?

If you have an infection caused by VRE you might need to stay in hospital for treatment until the infection improves.

Who can I speak to if I have further questions?

Please speak to any of the staff who are caring for you. If the staff are unable to answer your questions, or you require further information, please ask a member of staff to contact the Infection Prevention and Control Nurse Team on your behalf. Further information on VRE is also available via the Public Health England website:

www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

If you require a special edition of this leaflet

This leaflet is available in large print, Braille, on compact disk and in other languages on request. Please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on:

Telephone: 01244 366066
or email: cochpals@nhs.net

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若是你想索取這份傳單的中文譯本，請聯絡「病人預約中心」或向其中一名職員查詢。

Si vous voulez cette brochure en français, contactez le bureau des rendez-vous ou demandez à un membre du personnel.

यदि आप यह पत्रचा हिन्दी में लेना चाहते हैं तो कृपया पेशेन्ट अॅपॉइन्टमेन्ट सेन्टर से संपर्क करें या किसी स्टाफ से पूछें।

Haddii aad jeclaan laheyd buug-yarah-an oo af-Soomaali ku qoran la soo xiriir xarruunta bukaan ballaminta ama wax weydii xubin shaqaalaha ka tirsan.

Si desea recibir este folleto en español, sírvase contactar al Centro de Citas para Pacientes o solicitarlo al personal.

اگر آپ کو یہ کتابچہ اردو میں درکار ہے تو وینڈ اپ انٹلنٹ سینٹر یا کسی رکن سے رابطہ قائم کریں۔

Mae'r daflen hon ar gael (ar gais), mewn print bras, ar dâp sain neu ar ddisg, ac efallai mewn ieithoedd eraill ar gais. Cysylltwch â chanolfan apwyntiadau cleifion i ofyn am gopi.

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