



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

When you go home

In most cases you only need to be careful washing your hands (after going to the toilet, before cooking and eating and after coughing or sneezing).

Will I need to take special precautions at home?

Clean your home using regular household cleaners. The toilet and bathroom taps should be cleaned every two or three days. Continue washing your linen and clothing as before.

Will this affect my daily activities?

You can still continue to do all the things you have always done. People can visit you at home and you can visit other people. You can go shopping, to the movies or out to dinner. Will I need to inform anyone about my VRE

Will I need to inform anyone about my VRE?

The only people that you will need to inform are your local doctor, dentist and other health professionals that you are receiving treatment from. Some precautions may be required to prevent them from spreading VRE to other patients in their care.

For more information

Contact your ward or treating unit.

Better and
fairer care.
Always.



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Information for patients

Better and fairer care.

Always.

One of your tests shows that you have an antibiotic resistant germ called Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE). Staff must now make some changes to your care. This means that we will take special precautions while caring for you to prevent the germs from being passed on to other patients.

What is VRE?

We all have germs called Enterococci living in our bowel. Usually they do not cause harm. VRE are the same germs but are strains that cannot be killed by common antibiotics

What is colonisation?

You may hear staff use the term 'colonisation'. People who are 'colonised' are carrying the germ but are not infected or sick with it, so they do not require treatment.

How did I get VRE?

Commonly a person acquires VRE due to:

- Long periods of illness or hospitalisation
- Long-term antibiotic treatment
- Reasons that may not be understood.

Less commonly, VRE has been found in people who have never been in hospital.

Can VRE be harmful?

All Enterococci can cause infection if they enter any other part of the body other than the bowel.

Examples include wounds or blood via an intravenous line. VRE may be harmful if an infection occurs because antibiotic choices for treatment are more limited,

Is VRE contagious?

VRE may be transmitted directly through physical contact. This is why hand washing is so important. In hospital, those at higher risk are:

- Patients who have catheters, intravenous lines and wounds.
- Patients receiving antibiotic therapy (which upsets the balance of bacteria that live in the bowel).
- Patients who are receiving drugs that suppress their immune system

People such as your family and visitors are generally not at risk.

What will this mean for my hospital care?

To prevent the spread of VRE the hospital has developed certain strategies.

- You will need to stay in your room.
- You may be placed in a single room or in a room with other patients who are also colonised with VRE.
- The health team will put a sign on your door to alert everyone about the precautions they must take before entering your room.
- Hospital staff will wear gowns while caring for you.
- It is very important for all staff and visitors to wash their hands when they enter and leave your room.

How can I help?

Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of VRE. Wash your hands:

- After going to the toilet
- Before eating
- After coughing or sneezing.

Remind your family and visitors to wash their hands

How long will I need to be separated from other patients?

Every time you are an inpatient in the acute hospital you will need to be isolated. You will be cared for in a single room or in a room with others who are also colonised with VRE. It is very important that you do not use the beverage bay or communal kitchen areas that are used by other patients.

You should not visit other patients in the ward or hospital while you are an inpatient. Being VRE colonised does not mean that you cannot go outside if you are well enough. However, you will need to discuss this with the staff who are caring for you.

Remember to wash your hands before leaving your room.

Can I have visitors?

Yes, you may have visitors, but they must also take extra care. Visitors should report to the nurse before entering the room so that they know what to do. Visitors do not need to wear a gown but they must wash their hands when leaving the room. Visitors should also avoid communal areas of the ward e.g. the TV areas and the tea room/kitchen.

What will happen when I leave hospital?

If you go to another health service, we will inform the service you are being transferred to. Some precautions may need to be taken to prevent your caregivers from spreading VRE to other patients. Your VRE status will not affect your rehabilitation.