

# Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE) Infection Prevention and Control Fact Sheet for patients and carers



## What are Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

VRE are bacteria that are commonly found in the bowels (gut) of humans. Occasionally enterococci can cause infections in the urinary tract, wounds and blood stream. We usually treat these infections with an antibiotic called vancomycin. Sometimes the enterococci become resistant to this antibiotic, in other words the vancomycin no longer works against them. We call these Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci or VRE.



## How will I know if I have VRE?

Testing for VRE usually involves either providing a stool sample or taking a rectal swab which we send to the laboratory for testing. Other parts of the body may also carry these bacteria, so sometimes we take samples from elsewhere. Carrying out these tests will help healthcare workers to determine whether or not you need treatment for VRE.



## What happens if you are found to carry VRE while in hospital?

- ✓ If you are found to be **colonised** with VRE, (this means you have the bacteria on your body or in your gut but no symptoms of infection) you will not need any treatment.
- ✓ If you have an **infection** with VRE, we will treat you with antibiotics.
- ✓ We may move you to a single room while you have symptoms, such as diarrhoea. (VRE itself doesn't cause diarrhoea, however, symptoms like this may lead to the infection spreading more easily to others.)
- ✓ Healthcare workers will wear a disposable yellow plastic apron and gloves when caring for you.



## Will the VRE go away?

VRE may go away on its own eventually. However, as it is normal to carry enterococci in the gut, you may remain a carrier. They should not cause you any problems if you are fit and healthy.



## Are my friends and family at risk? Do I need to take any precautions at home?

VRE does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. Good hygiene is important and you should continue with this when you go home. There are no special precautions when washing your clothes or other items at home and you can go to any social events or public places as usual



## What will happen if I am admitted to hospital again?

If you are readmitted to hospital, it is important to tell staff if you have had VRE in the past.

**For more information please speak to the nurse looking after you**