



## What is Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

*Enterococci* are bacteria that live in the gut and genital tracts and normally do not cause any problems. But, this bacteria can become resistant to Vancomycin, which is an antibiotic that is often used to treat infections. When this resistance happens it is called VRE.

VRE can live harmlessly in the bowel for most people however, VRE can cause infections of the urinary tract, bloodstream or wounds.

## How can VRE be spread?

VRE is a common bug for people who spend a lot of time in hospital. There is often no way of knowing where or when you picked it up. It can spread between patients through direct contact with each other or by touching items or surfaces that the person with VRE may have touched, such as rails, toilets or equipment.

As patients in hospital are much more vulnerable to infection than patients in their own homes, special precautions are required to prevent the spread of VRE between patients in hospital.

### How can you tell that I have VRE?

Samples requested by your doctor such as wound or stool specimens are sent to the Microbiology Laboratory for testing. A report will be sent back to your doctor.

### What treatment will I need?

You do not usually need treatment for VRE. If you have an infection caused by VRE your doctor will decide what treatment you need and may advise antibiotic therapy.

### Do I have to stay in hospital longer?

If you have an infection you may have to stay in hospital until you have finished your antibiotics and are feeling better.

### Can my family and friends visit me while I'm in hospital?

Yes. It is important that all visitors clean their hands before and after they visit you. Visitors do not need to wear aprons and gloves unless they are helping you with a personal task. If your visitor has a long term health condition they should speak to a member of the nursing staff before visiting you.

### Will I get rid of VRE?

Your body may clear VRE from the bowel but it can remain in the bowel for some time.

Antibiotics can treat VRE infection but it will not clear VRE from the bowel.

## How can VRE be prevented from spreading in the Hospital?

The Infection Prevention & Control Nurse will tell the ward manager or nurse in charge if VRE has been diagnosed by the Laboratory.

You may be moved to a single room with your own bathroom for infection control precautions. A blue sign will be placed on your door.

VRE does not cause diarrhoea but because it is in the bowel, it can be spread more easily if you have diarrhoea.

Healthcare workers looking after you will be wearing aprons/gown and gloves on entering your room. The healthcare worker will remove these items and clean their hands before leaving the room.





## Instructions for Visitors

Please clean your hands before and after visiting. Please do not use patients' bathrooms or sit on beds. Do not visit other patients or areas of the Hospital.

## What can I do to help?

It is very important to tell your nurse or doctor when you are admitted if you have a history of VRE. Remember hand washing or using alcohol gel limits the spread of infection.

If a patient has VRE we may share that information with other hospitals. The Patient should also inform their carers of the result on admission to another hospital. This will help to stop the spread of VRE.

### How can I contact a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team?

Tell the Clinical Nurse Manager, doctor or nurse looking after you if you would like to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team and they will contact us.

We have made every possible effort to make sure that all the information provided in this leaflet is true, accurate, complete and up to date at the time of publication

Additional information can be found at:

<http://intranet.tuh.ie/departments/IPC/Pages/home.aspx>

#### References:

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/vre/>

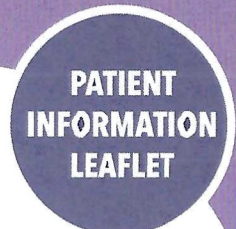
Health Protection Surveillance Centre)  
[www.hpsc.ie](http://www.hpsc.ie)



Tallaght University Hospital

Ospidéal Ollscoile Thamhlachta

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# VRE

## Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus

