

*If you have any questions about VRE, please ask your doctor or nurse.*

## VRE (Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci)

Your doctor or nurse has told you that you have VRE. Here are some of the most common questions about VRE. Feel free to ask your doctor or nurse if you have any other questions or concerns.

### What is VRE?

VRE are bacteria that are resistant to the antibiotic Vancomycin.

People who have VRE do not always develop an infection, yet they can still spread it to others because they are not aware of it. They may test positive for VRE, have no symptoms, yet the bacteria is present but not causing any harm (colonization). These people are known as carriers. They are colonized with VRE, but do not have an infection. In the hospital, it is very important to identify those with VRE so precautions can be taken to prevent it spreading to staff and other patients.

### How is VRE transmitted (spread)?

VRE is not airborne. It is spread if there is direct contact or touch:

- With a VRE infected or colonized person.
- With surfaces or equipment that are contaminated with VRE. Examples may include phones, bedside tables, home thermometers, bathroom fixtures, blood pressure cuffs, etc.

VRE can cause infections in the urinary tract, bloodstream or wounds. Only certain antibiotics may be used to treat VRE infections. Whether you carry VRE or are infected with it, it is spread the same way—through contact.

### What special precautions will the hospital staff use to take care of me?

**Contact precautions** are followed when caring for you. This means all hospital staff will wear gowns and gloves when entering your room. (You may leave your door open.) These steps help prevent further spread of VRE.

### How long will I need to be on contact precautions?

Precautions are taken until you have three rectal swabs or stool samples that test negative for VRE. These are taken at least one week apart. This policy is based on Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines. (If you have a low white blood cell count, it is unlikely that these tests will be negative.)

## May I have visitors?

Yes. Your visitors do not need to wear a gown and gloves because they are not going into other patient rooms. However, they do need to clean their hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand rub before and after any contact with you or your surroundings.

## How can I prevent the spread of VRE in the home?

Keeping your hands clean is the most important thing you can do to prevent infection and the spread of VRE. You may use an alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. Always wash your hands with soap and water for a least 15 seconds. Be sure to clean your hands with soap and water when they are visibly soiled. Always clean your hands well:

- Before and after meals
- While preparing meals
- After coughing, sneezing
- After using the washroom

Wear gloves if you come in contact with body fluids that may contain VRE, such as stool or dressings from infected wounds. Always clean your hands after removing the gloves.

## Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at [hlc@nm.org](mailto:hlc@nm.org), or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at [nm.org](http://nm.org).

*Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.*

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363, the Northwestern Lake Forest Patient Relations manager at 847.535.8282 and/or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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