

**Frequent hand hygiene  
(hand washing) is the  
single most effective  
way of preventing  
the transmission of  
infections.**



## Enquiries

Should you have any further questions regarding VRE please ask your hospital doctor or GP, or contact our Infection Control Coordinator on **(02) 6229 8983**.

Calvary John James Hospital acknowledges the Infection Control & Staff Health Department of Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, who assisted with the development of this brochure.



Public Hospital Bruce



**Consumer Endorsed**  
Patient Information Publication

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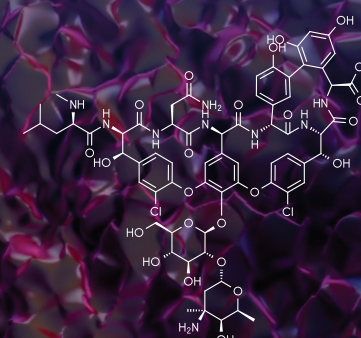
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## Vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) Patient information



**Calvary**

John James Hospital

Continuing the Mission of the Sisters of the Little Company of Mary

## What is vancomycin-resistant enterococci?

Vancomycin is an extremely strong antibiotic that is used to treat infections when other antibiotics have failed to work. Enterococci are bacteria that live in the gut and are generally harmless.

When exposed to vancomycin, enterococci can develop ways to stop the antibiotic working, causing vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE).

## Who is at risk of developing VRE?

- people who have been admitted to hospital on multiple occasions or who have had long-term admissions, e.g. oncology or renal patients
- people who have been treated with vancomycin
- patients who have had abdominal surgery
- ICU or critically-ill patients

## Is VRE harmful to you?

VRE does not usually cause a problem for healthy people. VRE can be present in a person's body without causing any issues, this is called being 'colonised' with VRE, which is the most common scenario for patients.

Rarely, VRE can migrate to other parts of the body and cause infection. This can make patients unwell, infections can occur in wounds, urine and blood.

## How do you know if you have VRE?

A wound or rectal swab, blood or urine sample will be collected and sent to the laboratory for VRE testing, most likely during your hospital admission.

## How is VRE spread?

VRE is commonly spread through contact with a person who has tested positive to VRE.

VRE may be present in urine, wounds and blood.

VRE can be spread from patient to patient when the bacteria is transferred on the hands of healthcare workers if hand hygiene has not been performed correctly.

VRE can also be spread through contact with contaminated surfaces and equipment, such as blood pressure machines and door handles.

Surfaces and equipment can become contaminated with VRE if hands are not washed after using the toilet.

## How can VRE spread be prevented?

Performing hand hygiene with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitiser is an effective way of preventing the transmission of health care-associated infections, including VRE.

Performing hand hygiene includes but is not limited to:

- before and after any physical contact
- after contact with surfaces in patients' rooms
- after using the toilet
- before handling food and eating
- whenever your hands are visibly soiled

Surfaces that are frequently touched, such as door handles and bathrooms, also require regular cleaning to reduce the risk of VRE transmission.



## What will happen while you are admitted to hospital?

You will be in a single room or in a shared room with another patient who has VRE. Staff will be required to wear a long-sleeved gown and gloves when caring for you to reduce the risk of spreading VRE to other patients on the ward.

If you have a VRE infection, your doctor will determine if you require treatment, this will be dependent on the laboratory results.

It is important that you remain in your room to reduce the risk of spreading the VRE bacteria. If you do need to leave your room, you will need to perform hand hygiene prior to leaving. You must not visit other patients in your ward or around the hospital.

If you need to be transferred within the hospital, the nursing staff will ensure that you are wearing the appropriate attire and inform the other departments to ensure appropriate care is taken to reduce the risk of the spread of the VRE bacteria.

Upon transfer, if staff caring for you are not wearing gowns and gloves, please advise them that you have been diagnosed with VRE.

## What happens when I go home?

You do not need to do anything extra at home. Good levels of general personal and household hygiene, including hand hygiene, are important to reduce the risk of spreading VRE to others.

Eating utensils and dishes may be washed as normal.

You can return to work when your doctor is happy for you to do so. If you are a health care worker, please supply a medical certificate signed by your doctor upon your return.

If you have to visit your hospital doctor, GP or another health care facility, please advise them that you have been diagnosed with VRE.

## Will my VRE go away?

Some people do eradicate their VRE. To achieve this, two follow up swabs/specimens need to be collected one month apart. Both results will have to be negative before you can be considered to be VRE-negative.