

**You can get further advice and information by:**

- Asking your Doctor or Healthcare Professional

**Other sources of information about health and health care:**

- **Public Health England** works with national and local government, industry and the NHS to protect and improve the nation's health and support healthier choices.  
Website: [www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)
- **NHS Choices** is the online 'front door' to the NHS. It is the country's biggest health website and gives all the information you need to make choices about your health.  
Website: [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

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## Infection Prevention and Control

# Glycopeptide-Resistant Enterococci (GRE) and Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

### Patient Information Leaflet



## What are GRE/VRE

Glycopeptide Resistant enterococci are bacteria that are commonly found in the bowels/gut of most humans. There are many different species of enterococci but only a few that have the potential to cause infections in humans and have become resistant to a group of antibiotics known as glycopeptides; these include Vancomycin (VRE). GRE/VRE are not particularly virulent but they can be more difficult to treat.

## Can GRE/VRE be harmful?

GRE/VRE can cause infections, including kidney infections, wound infections, urine infections or in severe cases, blood infection. Some people are found to have GRE/VRE living in their bowel or urine without causing any problems; this is referred to as being **colonised**.

## How is GRE/VRE treated?

Your body may clear GRE/VRE from the bowel as you recover, but this is not always the case, and it may remain in the bowel for some time. Taking antibiotics can encourage GRE/VRE to grow in the bowel again, so they should only be taken for a very good reason. Antibiotics are available to treat GRE/VRE infection; your doctor will prescribe the correct treatment if required but the antibiotics will not clear GRE/VRE colonised in the bowel.

## How do people get GRE/VRE?

Patients who have already taken lots of antibiotics are more at risk of picking up GRE/VRE. The reason for this is that the bacteria are more exposed to antibiotics, and are therefore more likely to develop 'resistance' to that antibiotic. It is not usually possible to identify where or how it was acquired.

GRE/VRE can be carried by patients, healthcare staff or visitors, either harmlessly (colonised) or infected. It can spread between patients through direct contact or indirectly by touching items or surfaces that the person with GRE/VRE may have touched, such as bed 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 GRE/VRE in hospital.

## What are the special precautions for patients with GRE/VRE?

Patients diagnosed with a GRE/VRE infection or colonisation may be transferred to a single room to minimise the risk of spread to other patients on the ward. You should ensure you wash your hands after using the toilet and before you eat. Try not to touch any wounds, catheters or drips. Patients unable to wash their hands should use the hand wipes provided. Patients, staff and visitors must pay special attention to hand hygiene.

## Can I have Visitors?

Your friends and family can still come and visit but they must clean their hands before and after visiting. The alcohol hand rub provided is sufficient although if they prefer they can wash their hands with soap and water.

- If your visitors are helping out with your physical care, nursing staff will advise if extra precautions are required e.g. gloves and aprons.
- Please do not let your visitors sit or lie on your bed.
- Visitors should use the public toilets and not the one in your room.
- If your visitors are visiting other patients in the hospital it is advisable that they visit them before visiting you.

## What happens when I'm ready to leave hospital?

There is no need to take special precautions at home. People in the community are usually fit and healthy so they are less likely than hospital patients to pick up GRE/VRE. Clothes, bed linen and dishes can be washed as usual. It is always very important to wash your hands carefully after using the toilet and before preparing meals or eating, to stop bugs spreading to other people. Clean hands protect you and others from lots of infections, not just GRE/VRE.

## How can I help?

If you go to the doctor, another clinic, hospital or other care establishment let them know you have had a positive GRE/VRE result.