



## Patient and Family Information Sheet: Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococcus

### What is VRE?

VRE is a strain of germs called Enterococcus, which is resistant to many antibiotics. A person may have the germs but show no sign of illness, or they may have an infection (show symptoms of illness). Healthy people rarely become ill with VRE. VRE rarely causes infections.

### What can I do at home to stop the spread of VRE?

Keep the area around the patient clean and use good hand washing.

Wash hands after going to the bathroom

### HOW TO WASH YOUR HANDS

1. Turn water on.
2. Wet hands.
3. Apply liquid hand soap to the hands.
4. Rub hands for 10-15 seconds; rub between fingers and around nails.
5. Rinse with running water.
6. Dry with paper towel.
7. Use the paper towel to turn off faucet (remember your hands were dirty when you turned on the faucet).
8. A waterless hand cleanser may be handy when a sink is not nearby.

### When to wash hands:

1. After urinating or having a bowel movement.
2. Before putting on gloves and after taking off gloves
3. Before eating, drinking, or cooking
4. Before applying make-up or inserting contact lenses

### When to wear gloves:

(Purchase at a pharmacy or medical supply store)

1. When changing incontinent briefs or cleaning up bowel or bladder accidents
2. When bathing the person with VRE

### What to do if clothing or bed linens get soiled with urine or bowel movement

1. Wash items separate from other family clothing

2. It is best to launder right away
3. Wear gloves.
4. Roll linen away from you.
5. Avoid touching things near you.
6. Put solid stool in the toilet and use toilet paper to touch the toilet handle to flush (discard toilet paper).
7. If linens can't be put into a washer right away, place in a plastic trash bag until able to wash them.  
Dispose of trash bag - do not re-use.
8. After putting soiled linen in the washer, take off gloves and wash hands.
9. Add laundry soap and water (use hot water and bleach if the item would not be damaged by it).
10. Turn on the machine.

**To clean the environment:**

1. Clean the area around the person with VRE daily with soap and water or any household cleaner
2. Wear yellow utility gloves to clean the bedside commode or bedpan after each bowel movement
3. Wash first with soap and water, then use bleach and water
4. Clean utility gloves by washing them while wearing (like you are washing your hands) and then clean again with bleach and water.

At times our staff will wear gowns and gloves to prevent the germs from getting on their clothing and taken to another patient's room.

**REMEMBER!!**

**The most important step you take to prevent spreading germs is hand washing!**

Our thanks to the Visiting Nurse Association of Colchester, VT for permission to use this information, with changes for inpatient use.