

How long will these special precautions last?

The special “Contact Precautions” may stay in place during the entire course of your stay here at the UHN. In some circumstances, they may be removed. This is on a case per case basis.

Is my family at risk?

No, these precautions are taken only to help prevent the spread of VRE in the hospital. Patients do not put their families at risk if they wash their hands and proper and regular cleaning of the home, especially the bathroom, is carried out.

If you have any questions about infection control, please ask your nurse to contact the Infection Prevention and Control unit, or visit us at Infectioncontrol@uhn.on.ca

Notes:

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: www.uhn.ca/patient/health_info.

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What is VRE?



UHN

Department of Infection Prevention and Control

Information for Patients and Families



Patient Education

Improving health through education



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VRE is a type of bacteria. The full name is **Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci**.

What are enterococci?

Enterococci are bacteria commonly found in the bowel of humans. Enterococci can sometimes cause infection.

What is Vancomycin?

Vancomycin is a strong antibiotic used to treat infections. Sometimes enterococci can become so strong that they do not respond to Vancomycin. This is known as **antibiotic resistance**.

How did I get VRE?

Diarrhea and improper environmental cleaning are the most common ways to spread the bacteria. If you have VRE and you clean yourself after a bowel movement, you can get it on your hands. You can pass it from your hands to whatever you touch (e.g door knobs, bed rails etc.).

The UHN maintains a high level of daily cleaning in all patient areas; however, VRE can stay on objects for up to 30 days or more. You can get VRE if you touch something that happens to have this bacterium on it, and then touch your mouth. This is why hand hygiene is extremely important.

Why are special precautions needed?

We do not want to spread VRE to anyone else. We may need to take special precautions because surfaces like toilets/bedpans and common areas that hands touch can easily become contaminated

with the bacteria. These special precautions prevent the VRE from spreading to other surfaces such as the healthcare workers hands, hospital equipment etc. and then spreading to other patients. Proper environmental cleaning also kills the bacteria. The bacteria can survive for a long time if surfaces are not properly cleaned.

What does this mean to me?

Most people with VRE carry it in their bowels without it ever causing problems or illness. There is no way to remove the VRE from your bowels; it very rarely makes you sick. You will probably not have any problems from carrying VRE.

What are the special precautions?

- If necessary, you will be placed on special precautions called “Contact Precautions”. You will be cared for in a private room (if available) at no cost to you. You will stay in your room except for tests and procedures. Your health care workers will be asked to wear gloves and gowns when in your room and when providing care outside of your room.
- All visitors are expected to follow these special precautions.
- We may limit any interactions you may have outside of your room.
- You will need to perform good hand hygiene at all times, especially after using the toilet or bedpan, before eating, and every time you leave your room. You can use either soap and water, or alcohol-based hand rinse. Make sure to wash/rub all surfaces of your hands for a full 15 seconds.
- It is very important for all staff and visitors to perform good hand hygiene when they enter and leave your room.