

Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci (VRE) - Fact Sheet

What is VRE?

VRE is a type of bacteria. It is called “Vancomycin-Resistant” because some antibiotics do not work well to treat it. It usually lives in the bowel or on the skin and may not cause harm. This is called colonization. Sometimes VRE can cause infections in people who are ill.

How does VRE spread?

VRE spreads by contact, not through the air. It can spread when hands touch a person who has VRE, hands touch surfaces or equipment with VRE on them and then touch the person’s mouth, wounds, or medical devices VRE can live on surfaces like bed rails, toilets, doorknobs and medical equipment. Cleaning hands well helps stop the spread.

Understanding Isolation Precautions

If you have VRE, you will be placed on Contact Precautions to protect others.

This means you may stay in a private room; staff will wear a gown and gloves, visitors must check in with the nurse first, and everyone must clean their hands when entering and leaving your room.

Isolation helps keep everyone safe.

How Does Haliburton Highlands Health Services (HHHS) Test for VRE?

A swab may be taken from your rectum. The lab checks the sample for VRE. If tests are positive, each time you come to the hospital you will be placed on isolation until we can make sure you can’t spread it. When it is safe, isolation will be stopped.

How Can You Help?

You can help by:

- Regularly washing your hands
- Reminding your visitors to wash their hands and wear a gown and gloves when visiting
- Following staff instructions
- Patients may be asked to remain in their room to help prevent the spread of infection. If it is necessary to leave the room for tests or procedures, hand hygiene shall be performed. Family members and caregivers can help support these precautions to keep everyone safe.

Remember:

Having VRE does not always mean you are sick.

We use extra precautions to prevent spreading and protect others.