

Patient information

Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococci (GRE) also known as Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

This leaflet has been produced to give you general information, and most of your questions should be answered by this leaflet. It is not intended to replace the discussion between you and the healthcare team however, it may act as a starting point for discussion. If after reading it you have any concerns or require further explanation, please discuss this with a member of the healthcare team.

Enterococci are a type of bacteria (germs) that live in the gastrointestinal tract (bowels/gut) of most people and do not cause illness. This is called colonisation. Sometimes these bacteria can cause infection if they get into an area of the body where they are not normally found such as a wound, urinary tract, heart valves and bloodstream.

Vancomycin is a type of antibiotic used to treat enterococci. When enterococci become resistant to vancomycin, which means this antibiotic will no longer treat these bacteria, we refer to this as resistant. Bacteria are finding new ways to become resistant to antibiotics commonly used to treat infections.

GRE does not mean that your infection cannot be treated with antibiotics. It means there are only a few antibiotics that will work to treat the infection.

Who is at risk of GRE?

People at risk of developing an infection with GRE include:

- People that have been in hospital for a long period of time
- People who have weakened immune systems e.g. transplant patients, patients in intensive care unit, dialysis patients
- Patients previously treated with vancomycin or teicoplanin
- Patients with medical devices inserted e.g. catheters, central lines, surgical implanted devices, or drips
- Patients who have undergone surgery involving the chest or abdomen

How do you know I have GRE?

As a routine or as a result of clinical decision a specimen was sent to the Microbiology laboratory for testing which has shown GRE.

What happens if I have GRE as an Inpatient?

If your specimen confirms you have GRE, whilst you are in hospital, your clinical team will take some extra precautions whilst caring for you:

1. Carry out a risk assessment to determine whether you should be moved to a single occupancy room (isolation) for the duration of your hospital stay
2. All clinical staff and visitors must wash their hands using soap and water or alcohol gel before going into your room and after leaving your room
3. All clinical staff providing you with direct care will be required to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) e.g. gloves, apron etc.
4. Clean the room daily with a chlorine-based disinfectant (personal items should be kept to a minimum and stored in the drawers or cupboard provided to keep surfaces clear)

5. Clean any equipment that we take into your room with chlorine after each use and we may leave other equipment in your room for the duration of your hospital stay
6. Provide you with your own commode (a chair with a hidden toilet) to use if your isolation room does not have an en-suite
7. You should avoid touching your medical devices e.g. catheters, drip lines etc.
8. You should wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol gel before entering and leaving your room. We ask you to try and not to leave your room and walk around areas where other patients are present, such as a canteen/cafe etc.
9. You may notice a sign on your door which is to inform staff of an infection risk however, this does not specify the type of infection

How is GRE treated?

Treatment is not necessary in most cases. However, if required, your doctor will discuss this with you.

Can I do anything to help GRE clear?

Sometimes, GRE may clear or go away on its own although occasionally it can persist in your gut for long periods. There are no known methods which will specifically clear it from your gut.

Will the treatment of my original condition be affected?

It is most unlikely, but you should discuss this with your medical team in hospital.

Are my visitors at risk of GRE?

No. GRE does not normally affect healthy people. However, your visitors should thoroughly wash and dry their hands before leaving your room. It is quite safe for pregnant women and children to visit you.

Will GRE delay me going home?

No, it should not. If you are going into a nursing or residential home, you may have a single room but you will be able to mix freely with other residents unless you have diarrhoea.

Will GRE impact people I live with?

When you go home, we advise good hand and personal hygiene. Handwashing is very important to prevent these bacteria spreading, so you must thoroughly wash your hands after going to the toilet and before preparing and eating food. Any person looking after you must also regularly wash their hands.

Regularly change your bedsheets and do not share towels with others in your household. You can wash clothes and bed linen as normal at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric and if soiled (dirty with faeces or urine), wash separately. Try to ensure you regularly clean your toilets and bathrooms with your usual household cleaning products. You should continue to maintain your regular activities. This should help to prevent others living in your household contracting GRE.

What happens if I am admitted to hospital again in the future?

If you are admitted to Pevensey Ward, you will be cared for in a side room or together with other patients infected with GRE. On general wards, you can be admitted into a bay and the need for a side room will be risk assessed by the Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPCT).

Sources of information

If you have any queries, please discuss these with the nursing or medical staff who can contact the IPCT for further advice.

Important information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

Your comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the patient experience team on 0300 131 4784 or esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net

Hand hygiene

We are committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is very important in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available at the patient bedside for staff use and at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

Other formats

If you require any of our leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department on 0300 131 4434 or esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

Reference

The Clinical Specialty that has agreed this patient information leaflet: Infection Prevention and Control

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