

What is Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)?

Enterococci are bacteria normally found in a person's bowels. These bacteria can sometimes cause infection. Vancomycin is an antibiotic used to treat infection caused by enterococci. One strain of Enterococcus bacteria known as Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE) has developed resistance to vancomycin.

What are the signs and symptoms of VRE infection?

VRE infection happens when the bacteria invade a site in the body and multiply in the tissue. Depending on the area infected, a person can have different symptoms that might include:

- Fever
- Wound infections
- Redness/inflammation
- Urinary tract infections
- Pneumonia.

How do you get VRE and how is it spread?

VRE is generally spread from person to person by direct contact with stool, urine or blood containing VRE. People with VRE can spread it to others when they forget to wash their hands after using the washroom. Other individuals can then become sick by touching contaminated surfaces such as toilets, sinks or other items and then touching their mouths or eating food without washing their hands. VRE can live in the environment up to seven days; so, commonly touched surfaces can be a major source for possible spread. VRE is not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

Keep hands clean!

The best way to prevent VRE (and other infections) from spreading to others is by cleaning your hands.

Clean hands often:

- If they are dirty
- Before preparing or eating food
- After blowing your nose
- After using the bathroom
- After contact with body fluids
- After changing a bandage

Remember!

- Use soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer
- If you can see dirt on your hands alcohol based hand sanitizers won't work. You must wash with soap and water.

Want more info?

Check out IPAC Canada (Infection Prevention and Control Canada)

<https://ipac-canada.org/antibiotic-resistant-organism-resources>

Public Health Agency of Canada

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/infectious-diseases/nosocomial-occupational-infections/vancomycin-resistant-enterococci.html>