Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci (VRE)

Enterococci are a common type of bacteria that live in the intestines of many people. Usually, enterococci are harmless. They simply live in the body without causing an infection. Sometimes, enterococci get into a part of the body where they do not belong. For example, they sometimes get into the bloodstream or the bladder. When this happens, infection may occur, causing fever or other signs.

Most enterococcal infections are easily treated with antibiotics. Vancomycin is a strong antibiotic to which some strains of enterococci have become resistant. The antibiotic does not kill the bacteria. When you have VRE, only a few antibiotics are effective against this strain of bacteria.

How to prevent VRE

VRE is usually spread from person to person through direct contact with body substances, such as stool, or by a person touching surfaces without washing their hands with soap and water.

How to prevent the spread of VRE in the hospital

Special precautions are taken to prevent the spread of VRE from one patient to another or from a patient to a staff member. Because VRE is spread through contact, the preventive measures are called Contact Precautions.

- Staff members and visitors that enter the room should wear gloves and gowns when in contact with you or items in your room.
- When entering or leaving the room, staff members and visitors should wash their hands well with soap and water for at least 15 seconds or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- To prevent the spread of VRE, you will need to get your doctor’s permission before you may walk the halls or leave your room. Remember to wash your hands or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before you leave your room.

VRE testing in the hospital

You may be tested again for VRE on another admission to the hospital. Testing involves swabbing two different areas of the body, at least three times and seven days apart. If any of the swabs come back positive, you will stay on Isolation Precautions. When you have three paired sets that come back negative, you will be removed from isolation.
How to prevent the spread of VRE at home

- Take antibiotics for as long as your doctor orders. Finish all of your antibiotics, including any refills if ordered.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Wear gloves if you have contact with blood or stool, such as changing diapers or changing a dressing for a wound, to prevent the spread of germs. Remember to wash your hands with soap and water after removing the gloves.

- Clean surfaces in bathrooms, the kitchen and other rooms with a household disinfectant or a diluted bleach solution. To mix a diluted bleach solution, add one-half cup of bleach to 4 cups of water.

- Wash your clothing and bed linens in the warmest temperature possible listed on the clothing care labels.

- Avoid sharing personal items with others.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.

The Library for Health Information is available to help you find more health information at (614) 293-3707 or e-mail: health-info@osu.edu.

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