



VRE AND / OR LRE PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

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One of your tests (cultures) show that you are carrying a germ that is an antibiotic-resistant *Enterococcus*. Two antibiotics often used to treat infections with *Enterococcus* are vancomycin and linezolid. The *Enterococcus* you are carrying is resistant to one or both of these antibiotics. These bacteria are referred to as **VRE (vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus*) and LRE (linezolid resistant *Enterococcus*)**. This is also known as being VRE or LRE "positive." Hospital staff will now take special precautions when taking care of you. This information sheet may help you and your family to understand what this means.

WHAT IS AN ANTIBIOTIC-RESISTANT GERM?

Antibiotics are medicines that are used to kill the germs (bacteria) that cause infections. An antibiotic resistant germ is not killed by the usual antibiotics. If an antibiotic resistant germ causes an infection, then a stronger drug must be used.

WHAT ARE VRE AND LRE?

Enterococcus is a bacteria (germ) that normally lives in most people's bowels (gut), though sometimes it can cause infections. Antibiotics often used to treat infections with *Enterococcus* are vancomycin and linezolid. Some types of *Enterococcus* are not killed by vancomycin or linezolid, so these bacteria are called vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE) or linezolid-resistant *Enterococcus* (LRE).

CAN IT BE HARMFUL?

Enterococcus is a normal gut germ that usually does not harm people and is needed to keep people healthy. But if the germ gets passed to another part of the body, it can cause an infection. You can also be "colonized" with VRE or LRE. This means that VRE or LRE is living on your skin or inside your body, but is not causing an illness or infection.

HOW DID I GET VRE OR LRE?

The main way you can get VRE or LRE is by having it spread to you from someone colonized or infected with one of these germs. This might be by direct touch (contact) with a person, or contact with things or surfaces in the room, such as bedrails, telephones, or other equipment that has VRE or LRE on it. You are more likely to get VRE or LRE if you have been very ill, have been in a hospital or nursing home, or have been on many antibiotics. Careful hand washing is the most important way to keep from spreading VRE and LRE to other patients. That is why all hospital staff, patients, and visitors must wash their hands and follow special precautions.

WHY ARE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS NEEDED?

Special precautions are needed in order to prevent the spread of this organism to other patients in the hospital who are also ill and therefore more likely to develop an infection. At the University of Virginia Health System (UVa), patients with VRE or LRE will be placed on Contact Precautions, also known as Contact Isolation. Patients will be placed in a private room or in a room with a patient with the same organism(s).

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT?

- You will be asked to stay in your hospital room as much as possible. When you leave the room, wash your hands well (with soap and water or hand gel) and wear a cover gown. You may walk in the main East-West hallway. You should NOT walk up and down the unit hallway, visit other patient rooms, or go to the common areas such as the cafeteria, dayroom, gift shop or nurses station.

- Signs will be placed outside the room to remind everyone about the special precautions.
- People who are taking care of you will wear gowns and gloves to prevent them from picking up the VRE or LRE and taking it to other patients.
- Visitors must also follow isolation precautions to minimize spread within the environment.
- It is very important for all staff and visitors to wash their hands when they come in and when they leave your room.
- Please wash your hands carefully after going to the bathroom and before eating.

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY AND VISITORS?

You may still have visitors. They must wash their hands when they come in and when they leave. They must put on gowns and gloves too.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I LEAVE THE HOSPITAL?

If you go to another hospital or nursing home or if you go to a doctor's office, clinic, dentist or have visits from home health, some precautions may still be taken. This is to prevent your care givers from picking up the germ and spreading it to other patients. Good hand washing is very important to reduce the risk of spread.

WHAT ABOUT AT HOME?

Once you leave the hospital and go home, you can return to your normal routine including going out in public because many activities in the community involve less risk for transmission and because the risk of VRE and LRE infection is low in healthy adults and children. No special cleaning of laundry or dishes is needed.

Remind everyone to wash their hands often. You should wash your hands before you eat and after you go to the bathroom. If anyone is sick at home, you should check with their doctor to see if any special precautions are needed to protect them from VRE and LRE.

WILL THIS GO AWAY?

Sometimes our bodies will eventually clear themselves of VRE and LRE by their natural healing and cleansing action. You may be checked regularly to see if you are shedding VRE or LRE from your bowels. There are medicines to help treat VRE and LRE infection, but there is no medicine to help VRE or LRE colonization go away more quickly.

HOW CAN I HELP?

If you need care from a doctor, hospital, home health provider, therapist, or other caregiver, please tell them you are VRE or LRE positive. They may choose to use special precautions when caring for you as well.

WHAT IF I AM ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL AGAIN?

Whenever you are admitted to UVA hospital, if you still have VRE or LRE, you will be placed in a single room (or a room with another patient with the same germ), and you will be cared for with Contact Precautions. Follow-up tests (cultures) may be done to check if the VRE or LRE is still present.

HOW DO I GET OFF ISOLATION?

Before stopping isolation, Infection Prevention & Control will arrange for you to have 3 sets of tests (cultures) to show that the VRE or LRE is gone. Follow-up tests at UVA may be done two months after your last positive VRE or LRE culture. If the VRE or LRE is gone, you will be "cleared" from special precautions. If you are in the hospital after you are cleared, you will be checked regularly to make sure you still do not have VRE or LRE.

If you are out of the hospital and want to be tested, or have any questions, please call UVA Infection Prevention & Control at (434) 924-0260 and ask for the Outpatient Infection Control Nurse.

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN AND WELL