What is Vancomycin-resistant Enterococci (VRE)?
Enterococci are bacteria normally found in the body and are often found in the environment. These bacteria can sometimes cause infection. Vancomycin is an antibiotic frequently used to treat enterococci infections. Occasionally, the enterococci no longer respond to vancomycin treatment and are called vancomycin-resistant enterococci or VRE. Most of these infections occur in people in the hospital.

What are the symptoms?
VRE can cause infections in the urinary tract, the bloodstream, or wounds. The symptoms are different depending on the site of the infection.

Who are most at risk of getting a VRE infection?
- People who have been treated with vancomycin or other antibiotics for a long period of time.
- People who are hospitalized and are on antibiotics for a long time, patients in Intensive Care Units, or in cancer or transplant units.
- People who have undergone abdominal or chest surgery.
- People with medical devices like urinary catheters or central intravenous (IV) catheters that stay in for a long time.
- People who are colonized with VRE have VRE bacteria in their bodies without it causing an acute infection.

How common is VRE?
The Center for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 1 out of 8 hospital infections are caused by enterococci and about 30% of those are VRE.

How is it spread?
- VRE is often passed from person to person by the hands of caregivers.
- VRE can also be spread by touching surfaces that are contaminated with VRE.
- VRE is usually not spread through the air by coughing or sneezing.

How is the disease treated?
- Most VRE can be treated with antibiotics other than vancomycin.
- People with colonized VRE but no acute infection, do not need treatment.

How is it prevented?
- Keep your hands clean. Wash them thoroughly after using the bathroom and before preparing food.
- Clean bathrooms frequently.
- Wear gloves if you come in contact with body fluids such as stool or infected wounds.
- If someone has VRE be sure to tell health care providers.

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information, call your health care provider or call Washtenaw County Public Health at 734-544-6700.

Visit our website at: [http://publichealth.eWashtenaw.org](http://publichealth.eWashtenaw.org)
Or the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention at: [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)
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