Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococci (GRE) or (VRE)
Patient and Visitor Information

This information is for patients, relatives and carers. It explains what Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococci (GRE) is, how it affects us, how it spreads and what we can do to stop it spreading.

What is 'GRE'?
GRE stands for Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococci. Enterococci are bacteria (germs) that are commonly found in the bowels (gut) of most humans. There are many different species of enterococci but only a few have the potential to cause infections in humans.

Glycopeptide resistant enterococci are bacteria that are resistant to the group of antibiotics known as Glycopeptides. These include Vancomycin and Teicoplanin. GRE are sometimes referred to as VRE – which stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci.

How does it spread?
There are two main ways to contract GRE / VRE infections:

- if the bacteria (which can live harmlessly in a person's bowel) are transferred to other areas of the body, e.g. wounds
- directly from person to person on the hands, or indirectly from contaminated equipment that has not been cleaned properly

What infections does it cause?
GRE can cause wound infections and blood poisoning. However, it can also cause infections of the bile duct or urinary tract.

Are some people more at risk than others?
The main risk factors for GRE / VRE infections are:

- prolonged hospital stay
- antibiotic treatment
- intensive care treatment

Is a GRE / VRE infection treatable?
GRE / VRE are not particularly virulent (severe or harmful) bacteria but they are more difficult to treat as there are fewer antibiotics available.

What happens when a patient is found to have GRE / VRE infection?
Patients diagnosed with this infection will be transferred to a single room for the remainder of their stay to minimise the risk of spread to other patients on the ward. People in hospital have a greater risk of infection because of illness, surgery and invasive devices, e.g. urinary catheters and drips. You will be given your own toilet / bathroom or commode.

Healthcare professionals will also take other precautions to prevent spread to other patients. They will wear disposable gloves and aprons to look after you and wash their hands before and after giving you care. Your doctor will prescribe you some antibiotics. Ensure you wash your hands with soap and water after using the toilet and before you eat. Try not to touch any wounds, catheters or drips.

What about my visitors?
Your friends and family can still come and visit but they must clean their hands with soap and water before and after visiting.

- if your visitors are visiting other patients in the hospital, it is advisable that they visit them before visiting you
- your visitors do not need to wear any protective clothing, e.g. gloves and aprons, unless carrying out personal care, e.g. shaving, or unless you are visiting another patient
- please do not let your visitors sit or lie on your bed
- please do not let them touch your wound or device, such as a drip or catheter
- visitors should also use the public toilets and not the one in your room

When can I go home?
You will be discharged home when your general condition allows. This may be before your infection is totally cleared; however this is not a risk to your family or friends.

When you are at home, continue with your normal personal hygiene routine (baths / showers) and with household cleaning and laundering of clothes in the usual way.

Further questions:
The hospital has an Infection Prevention and Control Team (IPACT), they are:

Sheila Loveridge – Lead Infection Control Nurse Specialist
Sarah Prevett - Infection Control Nurse Specialist
A Consultant Microbiologist
Jo Thomas - Director of Infection Prevention and Control

Should you have any further concerns or questions, please speak to the ward staff who will contact a member of the team for you, alternatively you may telephone us directly:

Infection Prevention and Control Team - Tel: 01342 414341

Please ask if you would like this leaflet in a larger print or in an alternative format

Reference: Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust GRE patient information leaflet 2013.
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