



## Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE) – *Frequently Asked Questions*

### **What is VRE?**

Enterococci are germs that live in the gastrointestinal tract (bowels) of most individuals and generally do not cause harm (this is termed “colonization”). Vancomycin-resistant Enterococcus (VRE) are strains of enterococci that are resistant to the antibiotic vancomycin. If a person has an infection caused by VRE, such as the urinary tract infection or blood infection, it may be more difficult to treat.

### **How is VRE spread?**

VRE is spread from one person to another by contact, usually on the hands of caregivers. VRE can be present on the caregiver’s hands either from touching contaminated material excreted by an infected person or from touching articles soiled by feces. VRE can survive well on hands and can survive for weeks on inanimate objects such as toilet seats, taps, door handles, bedrails, furniture and bedpans. VRE is easy to kill with the proper use of disinfectants and good hand hygiene.

### **What will be publicly reported?**

Each quarter the hospital will post its rate and number of new cases of new MRSA bacteraemia on its website.

### **What is bacteraemia?**

Bacteraemia is the presence of bacteria in the bloodstream and is referred to as a bloodstream infection.

### **What determines the rate?**

The total number of new cases of VRE bacteraemia acquired in the hospital in a quarter is divided by the total number of patient days for that quarter. Patient days are the number of days spent in a hospital for all patients. The results are multiplied by 1000. This represents the rate of hospital acquired associated VRE bacteraemia associated with the reporting facility per 1000 patient days for that quarter (e.g. 2 cases for that quarter / 30,000 days for that quarter = 0.000006 x 1000 = 0.06 per 1000 patient days). The rates of infection will be calculated by quarter.

### **What will the healthcare system do with the rate information?**

Hospital acquired infection rates provide one measure of patient safety and quality of care. The rate of hospital acquired VRE bacteraemia can be used to analyze any trends of infection, sources of infection and general surveillance of VRE bacteraemia. It can also assist hospitals to evaluate the effectiveness of infection prevention and control interventions and make further improvements based on this improvements based on this information.

## **Hand hygiene: everyone’s responsibility**

Good hand hygiene is the single-most effective way to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Healthcare staff, physicians, volunteers, patients, and visitors ALL have a role in maintaining a healthy environment.