

# ***Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococcus - GRE (1 of 3)***



## **What is GRE?**

Enterococcus is a type of bacteria (bug) that lives in the bowel. Some Enterococcus species become resistant to the glycopeptide type of antibiotics, including Vancomycin and Teicoplanin. An Enterococcus with this antibiotic resistance is known as a Glycopeptide Resistant Enterococcus or GRE.

GRE are sometimes called VRE, which stands for Vancomycin Resistant Enterococci.

## **How did I get GRE?**

You may have had GRE in your bowel without being aware of it, or being affected in anyway. This is called colonisation. We do not know how many people in the population carry GRE harmlessly in their bowel.

Patients who have already taken lots of antibiotics are more at risk of picking up GRE. The reason for this is that the bugs are more exposed to antibiotics, and are therefore more likely to develop resistance to that antibiotic, so the antibiotic no longer works.

GRE can spread between patients through direct contact with each other or by touching items or surfaces that the person with GRE may have touched, such as bed rails, toilets or equipment. As patients in hospital are much more vulnerable to infection than patients in their own homes, special precautions are required to prevent the spread of GRE between patients in hospital.

## **Can GRE be harmful?**

For most patients, GRE live harmlessly in the bowel and do not cause infection. Treatment is not necessary in most cases.

However, sometimes GRE can cause infection, for example when patients need specialist units such as intensive care, while receiving chemotherapy, and during a prolonged hospital stay. Antibiotics are needed to treat the GRE infection.

GRE can cause infections, such as kidney infections, wound infections or in severe cases, blood infection. If a patient is more vulnerable to infection and the infection is caused by GRE, it can be difficult to treat, because many of the commonly used antibiotics will not work against GRE. Doctors need to know as soon as possible if a patient is carrying GRE, and they will decide if treatment is needed. For GRE infection, the doctors may talk to a microbiologist so that the most effective antibiotics are chosen to treat the infection.

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customercare@salisbury.nhs.uk)

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

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## **What are the special precautions for patients with GRE?**

Special precautions have been designed to prevent GRE spreading between patients on the ward. If you have a positive test result for GRE, a careful check will be done to decide if you need to be cared for in an isolation room with your own toilet or commode.

If GRE is picked up in a wound swab or from urine taken from a urinary catheter or if you have diarrhoea, you may be cared for in an isolation room. GRE does not cause diarrhoea but because it lives in the bowel, it may be spread more easily if you have diarrhoea. To protect their hands and clothes from GRE, staff will wear gloves and aprons before coming into contact with you.

Patients, staff and visitors must pay special attention to hand hygiene. All staff must clean their hands before and after every contact with every patient, regardless of whether or not they have GRE. If visitors are helping out with your physical care, nursing staff will advise if extra precautions are required, such as wearing gloves and aprons.

Your treatment and care in hospital will continue as usual and you can go for any tests or therapy that you may need in other departments. Housekeeping staff will clean the area where you are being nursed thoroughly every day.

## **Are visitors at risk of GRE?**

No. GRE does not normally affect healthy people. Your visitors must thoroughly wash and dry their hands before leaving the ward area. It is safe for pregnant women and children to visit.

## **What happens when I'm ready to leave hospital?**

You can go home as soon as your doctor says you are ready, even if you have GRE. Carrying GRE should not affect your discharge. If you are going to another hospital or nursing home, your nurse or doctor will let them know about your positive GRE result.

## **What happens when I go home?**

There is no need to take special precautions at home. People in the community are usually fit and healthy so they are less likely than hospital patients to pick up GRE. Clothes, bed linen and dishes can be washed as usual. It is always very important to wash your hands carefully after using the toilet and before preparing meals or eating to stop infection spreading to other people. Clean hands protect you and others from lots of infections, not just GRE.

## **Will I get rid of GRE?**

Your body may clear GRE from the bowel as you recover, but this is not always the case, and it may remain in the bowel for some time. Taking antibiotics can encourage GRE to grow in the bowel again, so they should only be taken for a very good reason. Antibiotics are available to treat GRE infection but they will not clear GRE from the bowel.

## **How can I help?**

If you go to the doctor, another clinic, hospital or nursing home, let them know you have had a positive GRE result. They can then take special precautions to stop GRE spreading to other patients who might be more prone to getting a GRE infection.

## **What happens if I am admitted to hospital again in the future?**

You may have swabs taken to test for GRE, and a careful check will be done to decide if you need to be cared for in an isolation room with your own toilet or commode.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask the doctors or nurses caring for you.