

# The Safe Patient

An educational patient safety series with free downloadable brochures, a service of The Patient Channel and Safe Care Campaign, in cooperation with the CDC

## Patient Safety: What You Should Know About VRE

While in the hospital you're vulnerable to many different infections, especially if you have a weakened or a compromised immune system. Some of these infections are resistant to many of the commonly used antibiotics. You may have heard of M-R-S-A, a resistant bacteria that can cause serious skin infections. But there's another common resistant infection that begins with bacteria that usually live in the bowels. It's called VRE; Vancomycin-Resistant Enterococci. VRE is just another bacteria we usually carry in our bowels, that can sometimes get out and turn into an infection elsewhere. Enterococci are just one of many bacteria we carry in our bodies that can cause infections in the hospital.

- **Symptoms include fever, chills, and redness at the site of the infection and if you experience any of these, let your healthcare provider know immediately.** While V-R-E is resistant to vancomycin there are other antibiotics available to treat it. But there are ways to protect yourself: VRE is passed on from person to person on hands and contaminated surfaces. **To prevent the spread of VRE, make sure that you and everyone who comes in contact with you wash or sanitize their hands before and after they have contact with you.**
- **Ask hospital personnel to put on a fresh pair of gloves if they are taking care of you, but only after they have washed their hands. If you have a urinary catheter, ask every day if it's still needed, and request that it be removed as soon as is it safe do so.** If you are exposed to VRE, doctors may put you into an isolated room. Don't be alarmed. This is only to prevent the VRE from being transmitted to other patients.
- You can protect yourself from VRE and other dangerous infections by staying aware of the risks and **insisting that everyone wash their hands before and after they come in contact with you.**

