

# Glycopeptide-resistant enterococci (GRE)

## Infection Control Team

### Patient Information Leaflet

#### Introduction

This information is for patients, relatives and carers. It explains what glycopeptide-resistant enterococci (GRE) are, how they affect us, how they spread and what we can do to stop them from spreading.

#### What are glycopeptide-resistant enterococci?

Enterococci are bacteria normally found in the bowel of healthy individuals. There are many different species of enterococci but only a few have the potential to cause infections in humans.

Sometimes these bacteria become resistant to a group of antibiotics called glycopeptides, for example, antibiotics called vancomycin and teicoplanin. These are known as glycopeptide-resistant enterococci (GRE). They may also be referred to as VRE (vancomycin-resistant enterococci). They were first detected in the UK in 1986.

You can pick up GRE everywhere, for example, when you are out and about in your local community, in residential homes and in hospital.

## What infections can be caused by GRE?

GRE may exist in your body but not cause any harm. This is called colonisation and often persists for months, and sometimes for years.

The most frequent site of colonisation is the large bowel. Other sites that become colonised include the throat, skin and vagina. GRE can cause the following infections:

- Wound infections
- Blood poisoning (known medically as bacteraemia)
- Urinary tract infections
- Infections of the abdomen and pelvis

## Who gets GRE?

You are more likely to become colonised or infected with GRE if you:

- Have a serious illness which affects your body's ability to fight infection.
- Spend long periods of time in hospital.
- Have been taking antibiotics for a long time.
- Have had medical devices such as urinary catheters which have been in place for a long time.
- Have had surgical procedures such as abdominal or chest surgery.

## How is GRE spread?

- GRE can be spread between patients and healthcare workers from contaminated hands, equipment and surfaces.
- The GRE bacteria that you normally have in your gut can spread to other areas of the body where it is not normally found.

## **How do I know I have GRE?**

To test if you have GRE, we will take a swab test of a wound and/or a stool (faeces), urine or blood sample. The swabs or samples are sent specifically for GRE screening in the microbiology laboratory to confirm if the bacteria are present. We do not routinely test all patients for GRE.

## **Can it be treated?**

Treatment is not always necessary but if you need treatment, your doctor will discuss this with you. This may include antibiotics.

## **What happens if I have GRE?**

If you are in hospital, you may need to be nursed in a single room on your own to prevent it from spreading to other people. Staff will wear an apron and gloves when providing you with care. Everyone entering or leaving your room must wash their hands with soap and water or disinfect them with hand sanitiser.

## **Will GRE affect treatment of my original condition?**

No. Your treatment in hospital will carry on as usual.

## **Will my visitors get GRE?**

GRE does not normally affect healthy individuals. Your visitors must wash their hands with soap and water before entering or leaving your room.

## **Will I have to stay in hospital longer?**

No. If you are medically fit and can go home, you will be able to leave hospital. You will be able to carry on with life as normal. We will notify your GP.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Infection Control Team on 01384 244174 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

**This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:**

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/about-us/quality/infection-control/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email [dgft.patient.information@nhs.net](mailto:dgft.patient.information@nhs.net)

**This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.**

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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