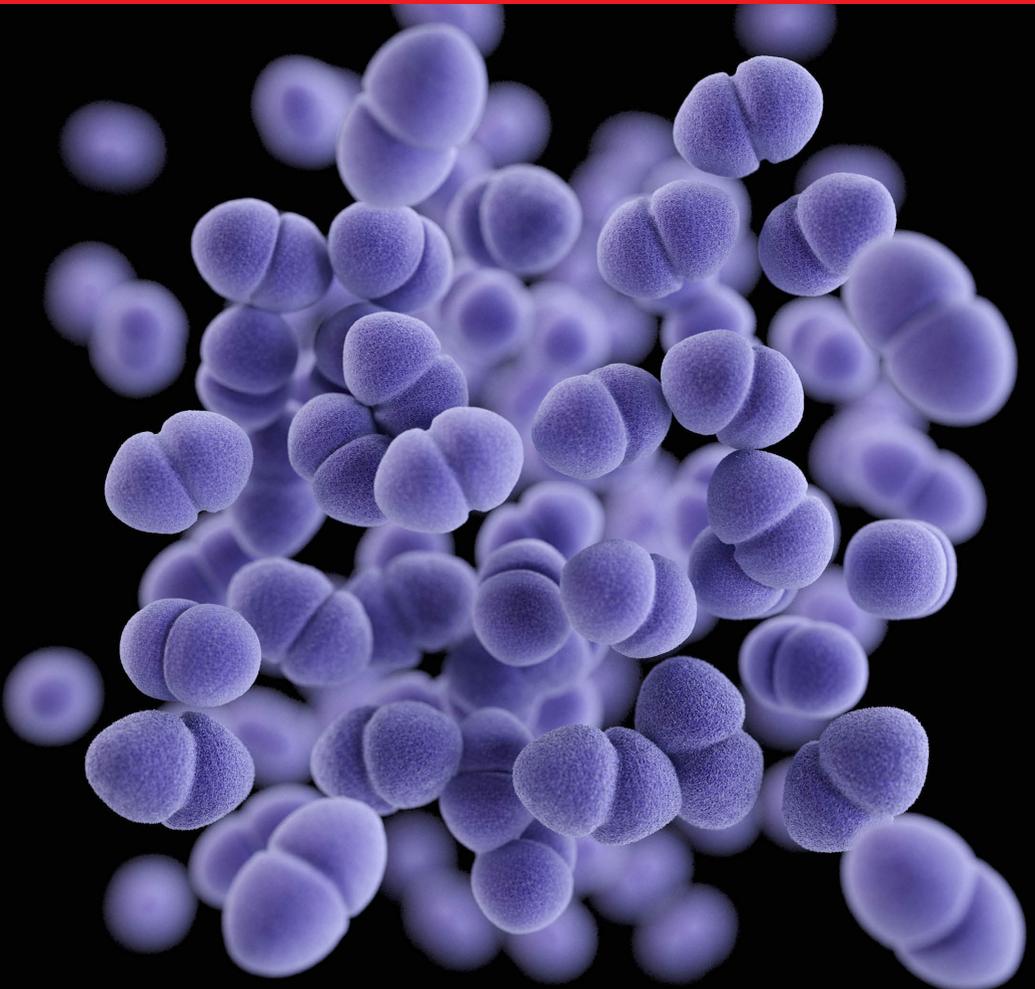


# VRE

## Vancomycin-resistant enterococci

Information for patients and visitors



# Measures against vancomycin-resistant enterococci

Switzerland is currently experiencing a spate of cases of vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE). Enterococci are bacteria that can be found in normal human gut flora. But when enterococci show additional resistance to the antibiotic vancomycin, the term VRE is used. Resistance means that antibiotics normally used for treatment purposes no longer work and potential infections, particularly among seriously ill people, become harder to treat. It is therefore essential to combat the transmission of VRE within hospitals, even though the bacteria do not trigger any disease in the vast majority of VRE-positive patients.

## Transmission routes

People colonized with VRE may transmit these to others. This transmission occurs whether or not the person concerned feels ill or experiences any other symptoms. The transmission of VRE between individuals mainly occurs via the hands, as well as through contact with contaminated materials or surfaces. Therefore, the most important measures in preventing transmission are hygienic disinfection of hands, and cleaning and disinfection of patients' rooms.

To prevent transmission to other people, patients who have tested positive for VRE or are still under investigation are treated under special isolation conditions in hospital (individual rooms, special protective clothing such as a gown and gloves). In most cases, a positive test for VRE does not represent any danger to the patients concerned themselves, although transmission to other people must be prevented.

## Measures at University Hospital Basel

As VRE demonstrate great capacity to survive in the environment and the bacteria can spread quickly, particularly in densely populated spaces like hospitals, University Hospital Basel (UHB) adopts several measures at the same time. These include strict compliance with isolation measures, changes to rules for visitors, additional staff training on proper disinfection of hands for all concerned, intensive cleaning and disinfection measures, and tests for all people potentially affected by VRE (rectal swabs).

All patients testing positive for VRE at UHB are isolated from possible contact in order to prevent further transmission. This means that patients are isolated in individual rooms where possible and staff and visitors only enter the room if wearing special protective clothing such as a gown and gloves. If large numbers of patients are affected, it may also be necessary to isolate private patients in multiple-occupant rooms.

The following points are very important as regards isolation measures:

- Picture-based instructions on how to enter and leave the room are displayed on the doors of isolation rooms.
- Everyone must put on a gown and gloves when they enter the room.
- It is vitally important to disinfect hands thoroughly before entering and leaving the room.
- Hand disinfectant is available near the door in each patient's room.

The most important measure to prevent transmission is hygienic disinfection of hands.

## Visitors

Visitors report to nursing staff before entering the isolation room. They are told about the hygiene measures they need to follow. Children under 12 are not allowed to enter isolation rooms.

## Disinfection of the environment

Patients' rooms and furniture are disinfected daily by the cleaning team with a suitable disinfectant.

## Measures at home (after leaving hospital)

Wash hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water.