

# Vancomycin-intermediate *Staphylococcus aureus* (VISA) Vancomycin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (VRSA)



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## Fact Sheet

### What are VISA and VRSA?

VISA and VRSA are specific types of *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria that have developed resistance to the antibiotic vancomycin. Staph bacteria are commonly found on the skin and in the nose of about 30% of people. Most of the time these staph bacteria do not cause harm. Sometimes they can cause serious infections in the blood, lungs, bones or heart.

### What are the symptoms?

VISA and VRSA can cause a range of symptoms that are usually associated with infection. Cough, fever, chills, aches and weakness may occur.

### How are they spread?

These bacteria are spread by direct person to person contact. They can also be spread by contact with wounds or materials that have had contact with drainage such as bandages. Touching soiled clothes, towels, and bedding can also spread the germs.

### Who gets VISA or VRSA?

Persons that develop VISA and VRSA infections tend to have other conditions such as diabetes and kidney disease. Previous infections with methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) can also put a person at risk. Tubes going into the body such as catheters, a recent or long stay in a hospital, and taking vancomycin and other antimicrobial agents can make these infections more likely.

### How do you know you have these germs?

VISA and VRSA would be found by lab tests on body fluid such as blood, urine, or pus. Special

tests are done to see which antibiotic will kill or slow the growth of the bacteria.

### How is VISA or VRSA treated?

VISA and VRSA infections can usually be treated with other approved drugs. Lab tests will be done to help your doctor decide which antibiotics are the best treatment.

### How can you prevent VISA or VRSA?

If an infected patient is in a hospital, all those who provide care must:

- Wear gloves before and after contact with body substances
- Wash hands often
- Follow all infection control practices.

If you visit a friend or family member who is infected with VISA or VRSA while they are in a hospital, follow all the hospital's instructions.

At home, persons having close physical contact with infected persons should: (1) keep their hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water, (2) avoid contact with other people's wounds or material contaminated from wounds. (3) handle all laundry carefully to avoid spreading germs.

### Where can I get more information?

You can get more information by contacting the Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention at 1-800-821-5821 or by Email to [disease.reporting@maine.gov](mailto:disease.reporting@maine.gov)

Information is also available on the web at: <http://www.maine.gov/idepi> or by contacting your doctor, nurse, or local health center.