



Bassett Healthcare Network

Change in MRSA and VRE Contact Precautions Policy Answers to Patients' Frequently Asked Questions

What are “contact precautions”? Contact isolation precautions is a clinical phrase that refers to the practice of using gowns, gloves and private rooms when caring for or visiting patients known or suspected of having an infection, disease, or germs that are easily spread by touching the patient or items in the patient’s room.

What is your new policy regarding the use of contact precautions for patients with MRSA or VRE? Effective this September (2017), Bassett Healthcare Network will stop using contact precautions (gowns, gloves and private rooms) for most patients hospitalized with either methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) or vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus* (VRE) and instead use other evidence-based infection control practices.

Why is the policy changing? The most important reason is that we can use more effective strategies to keep patients safe from all germs, not just MRSA and VRE. There have also been numerous studies that show isolation precautions often lead to less contact between patients and their doctors and nurses. So, stopping the use of contact precautions for MRSA and VRE is better for patients because they won’t be in isolation and can be seen by their doctors and nurses more frequently.

Have other hospitals made this change? Yes. Other health systems that have gone this route include Cleveland Clinic, University of Rochester and several others in the upstate and central NY region.

What are the more effective strategies you’ll be using for MRSA and VRE patients? There are several, but most important are the following:

- All health care workers will use excellent hand hygiene with alcohol-based hand rub or soap and water. This means that all staff must clean their hands before they enter your room and after they leave it. They must also clean their hands before they examine you or do things like starting IVs or taking blood. *Please feel free to ask staff if you are unsure if they have cleaned their hands.*
- Staff will continue to use standard precautions (basic infection control) at all times. In other words, they must wear gowns, gloves, and sometimes masks or goggles if there is a chance they may come in contact with blood, body fluids, or non-intact skin.
- Each patient’s area will be kept as clean as possible using the appropriate cleaning products recommended for hospital/patient care use.
- We will continue to use contact precautions in some instances, such as for other germs that may be difficult to treat or are less frequently seen.



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Is it safe for patients with MRSA or VRE to share a room with other patients? Yes, sharing a room and bathroom does not pose a risk to patients. Hand hygiene is important to prevent picking up any unwanted organisms, including MRSA and VRE. In fact, most germs that cause serious infections in health care are spread by people's actions. Patients and visitors are encouraged to perform hand hygiene (thorough hand washing with soap and water or use hand sanitizer) before eating, after using the bathroom, and frequently during the day.

How will you know your new policy is working? Other hospitals and health systems that have already made this change have been very successful and we expect similar results. We have always and will continue to closely monitor the presence of MRSA and VRE infections in the hospital. If we see a rise in that number, we will take another look at the policy.