As it is likely to remain in your gut, you should be very careful to wash your hands thoroughly every time you go to the toilet.

Coliforms are not a risk to healthy individuals, so you do not pose a danger to your friends and family.
**I have been told that I am carrying this germ: what is it?**
Enterobacteriaceae are some of the many types of bacteria that normally live in the healthy human gut where they are part of the normal bacterial population. Enterobacteriaceae are often referred to as coliforms or Gram negative bacilli and are a group of similar bacteria with names such as E.coli, Klebsiella pneumonia, E. cloacae. They are too numerous to list here.

**Why all the fuss?**
This particular stain of coliform is resistant to many different antibiotics that can be used to treat any infections it may cause. Although rarely mentioned in the media, bacteria like this one are increasingly common in this country and in the community. The antibiotics that are active against it all have to be given intravenously.

**What will it do to me?**
Coliforms are a normal inhabitant of the gut and we may also have found it on a “screening swab”. If it is just living quietly on your skin, throat or gut, this is known as colonisation and it will do you no harm whatsoever. Sometimes, however, this bacteria does cause illness in which case it is said to be causing an infection.

The most common infection caused by multi-resistant coliform is urinary tract infection (cystitis). pneumonia and bloodstream infection (bacteraemia). Infections must be treated promptly with appropriate antibiotics, which have to be given intravenously.

**Where did I get it from?**
You may have picked up this bacteria during your stay in hospital as we know it can be passed from person to person. However, it can be found in the community as well.

**Why am I not being treated?**
Colonisation is not treated with antibiotics as it will not make it go away. Giving antibiotics unnecessarily may cause this bacteria to develop resistance to one of the few antibiotics that will still be active against it. You will not be given antibiotics unless you have an infection.

**Why am I in an isolation room?**
This germ can be passed on from person to person, usually via unwashed hands. You are in an isolation room because it is easier for us to prevent it spreading to other patients, some of whom may be sicker or more vulnerable than you. Sometimes the need for an isolation room is greater for another patient, so you may remain in the ward bay.

**What are the hospital doing about this?**
We are trying to identify people colonised or infected with multi-drug resistant coliforms as early as possible. Carriers may be put into a single room and staff and visitors are expected to wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand gel before and after they leave the room. You can help by reminding staff and your visitors that they should be doing this.

**What about patients and visitors?**
It is just as important for you to wash your hands. Always wash your hands after using the toilet, commode or bedpan or before eating. Wet wipes are a convenient way of doing this if you are unable to get to a sink.

We would encourage visitors to use the alcohol hand rub when entering or leaving the ward.

**Is it a problem for my visitors?**
Coliforms are not a problem for healthy people.

Visitors should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand rub before and after they visit you. The hand rub dispensers are situated in your room and outside the door of each ward.

**What about when I go home?**
Coliform colonisation will not delay or prevent you from going home. If you have an infection that needs treating, you will have to stay in hospital for a course of intravenous antibiotics (as there are no oral antibiotics in tablet form that we can give you for it).