

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)

Information for patients, carers and relatives

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ which lives harmlessly on the skin and in the lining of the nose. It can be found on up to a third of the population without their knowing or coming to any harm. This is known as colonisation. There are times when it can cause a mild infection of spots or boils.

Rarely it can cause severe diseases such as wound infections or infection of the bloodstream (septicemia).

Germs are becoming increasingly resistant to antibiotics and MRSA is an example of this. Methicillin is a form of the most effective antibiotic used to treat infection caused by Staphylococcus aureus.

How do you get MRSA?

MRSA is most commonly spread from person to person by touch or from the environment around people with MRSA. You can transfer it from one part of your body to another; this is limited by thorough hand washing and good personal hygiene.

Will I be tested for MRSA?

All patients coming into our community hospitals are risk assessed and so you may be tested (screened) for the presence of MRSA if you have a wound or invasive device such as a catheter, or have had MRSA previously. This is in accordance with the Department of Health screening programme.

How will I be screened for MRSA?

We can find out if you have MRSA by taking swabs from the inside of your nose, and from your groin; if you have a wound that will also be swabbed. A specimen of urine will be taken if you have a urinary catheter.

The swabs will be sent away to be tested and the results will come back in a few days. If you do test positive we will let you know and if clinically appropriate you may start treatment.

Is MRSA treated?

Depending upon whether the MRSA on your skin is assessed as a risk or not for you, you may be prescribed a special body and hair wash and a cream to use in your nose. Occasionally antibiotics are prescribed when there is an infection or risk of infection. If you are not prescribed a treatment it is because this has been assessed by your clinical team as not clinically indicated. Each patient is different and assessed individually on the best course of action.

You may be moved to a side room to reduce the chance of the spread of MRSA. Health professionals will wash their hands before and after each time they care for

you.

Can MRSA return after treatment?

Yes, it can. MRSA can come back and some people will show a positive result again, this is not necessarily something to be alarmed about but you may wish to discuss with your clinical team what this means.

How do I reduce the chances of infection whilst I am in hospital?

Wash your hands after visiting the toilet, before meals and when they look dirty (for example after reading a newspaper your fingers can look dirty from the ink).

If you are unable to wash your own hands then please ask a nurse who will be happy to help you.

Don't touch any wounds or any medical equipment that goes into your body (eg a catheter). It is very easy to transfer germs that live on your hands into wounds by touch.

You are encouraged to ask all members of staff to wash their hands before touching you.

Encourage visitors to wash their hands or use the hand sanitizer before and after visiting you.

Visitors should not sit on your bed or place any bags on your bed.

Advice on discharge

Usually when patients go home it is no longer necessary to take the same precautions. You may be asked to complete a course of treatment that was started while you were in hospital.

You are not infectious to family and friends or other healthy people you are in contact with / meet socially.

For more information

This organism is not a risk for normal healthy people, and every day activity is strongly recommended.

Pregnant women are at no higher risk from MRSA than anyone else.

You can find out more about MRSA by:

- Asking your community hospital nursing staff or doctor
- Asking your GP or practice nurse

Infection control

This leaflet is one in a series about infection control. Others in the series are:

- Preventing and controlling healthcare associated infections
- Clostridium difficile
- Norovirus