

MRSA

Meticillin-resistant
Staphylococcus aureus

**Information leaflet for
patients and visitors**



Health and
Social Care

What is MRSA?

MRSA is meticillin (previously known as methicillin) resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ that can live harmlessly on the skin and/or in the nose of about 1 in 3 people.

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* that has become resistant to a number of different antibiotics. However, effective treatment is available.

Most people who are carrying MRSA on their bodies or in their nose don't suffer any ill effects. However, if someone has MRSA infection, they will be unwell and have symptoms of infection, such as pain, high temperature, soreness/swelling at site of infection.

Where are the most common places to detect MRSA?

MRSA is commonly found in the nose, back of the throat, armpits, skin folds of the groin and in wounds. The only way to know if you have MRSA is by sending a swab or a sample, such as urine, to the hospital laboratory for testing.

Why is MRSA significant in hospitals?

Patients in hospital may be more susceptible to developing an infection due to their illness and/or the treatment they may be receiving. This is why simple measures, such as hand hygiene, are vital in the prevention of the spread of MRSA.

How did I acquire MRSA?

It is rarely possible to know how you may have acquired MRSA. MRSA may have been on your skin/in your nose for some time before your hospital admission or you may have picked it up since your admission to hospital.

How can I get clear of MRSA?

- Sometimes MRSA can disappear from body parts over a short period of time; however, other people may continue to carry MRSA for a long time.
- You may be given antibiotic treatment to clear your infection if this is appropriate.

- Trying to get rid of carrying MRSA may be recommended. Your doctor may give you an antibiotic cream to apply to areas of your body and/or an antiseptic skin cleanser to use as part of your daily personal hygiene for around five to seven days.
- Prolonged use can result in the bacteria becoming more resistant to treatment.

What will happen to me now?

If you remain in hospital you may be moved into a single room to prevent MRSA being passed to other patients.

If you are medically fit, you will be discharged home or to your care home.

Can I have visitors?

Visitors must adhere to hospital/care home visiting policies.

- Visitors can reduce the possibility of spreading MRSA by washing their hands before and after they visit. **Soap and water or hand sanitisers may be used for this.**
- Generally, visitors don't need to wear gloves and aprons; nursing staff will provide guidance on this.

What happens when I go home?

- MRSA does not usually harm healthy people, including elderly people, pregnant women, children and babies.
- If you are trying to get clear of MRSA, you will be given written instructions to help you continue your treatment at home if necessary.
- You do not normally need to take special measures in the home; but you should maintain a high standard of cleanliness and personal hygiene.
- If healthcare workers visit your home, they must wear gloves and aprons while providing direct intimate care to you to avoid spreading MRSA to other vulnerable patients.
- The hospital doctor will write to your GP to let him know about your MRSA treatment and if your swabs need to be sent again and when.

What will happen if I need to go back into hospital?

If you need to go back into the same hospital or a different hospital, you should inform the staff either in the Admissions Office or Accident and Emergency Department that you have had MRSA.

Hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of MRSA. Please refer to the *Hand hygiene* leaflet for instructions. Posters are available at all hand washing sinks.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/care home staff.

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.

Patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

