

MRSA - Information for Patients, Relatives, Carers and Visitors

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus, a particular form of Staphylococcus (Staph) aureus, a type of bacteria (germ).

Everyone carries many sorts of bacteria on their skin and in their bowels. Normally they cause no harm and indeed some are essential for good health. About 1 in 4 people carry Staphylococcus aureus on their skin or in their nose. Problems can be caused when bacteria get to the wrong place at the wrong time.

What problems can Staphylococcus aureus cause?

Usually Staphylococcus aureus causes no problems. When it does cause infection it is usually minor and affects the skin, resulting in infected cuts and boils. Occasionally it causes severe infection. Patients ill with other diseases who have surgical wounds, catheters or drips, which allow bacteria to enter the body, are more at risk of severe infection.

What is different about MRSA?

MRSA acts in the same way as other types of Staphylococcus aureus and causes the same range of infections. What makes MRSA different is its resistance to antibiotics. Antibiotics are available to treat MRSA infection but some are more difficult to give (injection only) or may cause side effects. This makes the spread of MRSA in hospitals more concerning.

How long has MRSA been around?

MRSA is not a new problem – the strains that can cause outbreaks in hospitals first appeared in the early 1960s. In the UK there has been and continues to be emphasis on

prevention of MRSA and control of its spread. Hand hygiene and cleaning the environment remain the most important measures to prevent the spread of infection including MRSA.

How do I know if I have MRSA?

MRSA might be found from screening swabs taken before or on admission. It might also be found from specimens taken when you have an infection. You will then be informed of these results.

I have MRSA what will happen if I am in hospital?

You may be nursed in a single room if appropriate or alternatively you may be nursed in a bay/small ward with other patients with MRSA.

Staff will take standard precautions to prevent MRSA spreading to other patients.

These precautions are used to prevent the spread of any infection between patients. These include hand hygiene and when necessary wearing gloves and aprons.

I have MRSA do I need treatment?

If you are well and have no symptoms treatment may not be necessary. However, if you are in hospital or about to be admitted you might be advised to use antiseptic washes and antiseptic nasal ointment to reduce the risk of the MRSA causing trouble.

If you develop an infection due to MRSA you will need treatment with antibiotics that work against MRSA.

Are there any risks to my family?

MRSA is not a risk to healthy people.

However, if a family member is about to go into hospital please inform the ward concerned.

MRSA should not affect any aspects of your normal lifestyle, nor any activities you are involved in.

Your GP or community nurse should have been informed that you have had MRSA but it is worth reminding them if you need to see them about your current health or in the future.

If you or your carers have any queries, please feel free to discuss this with the ward staff or a member of the Infection Prevention & Control Team.

I've had MRSA—what if I need to go into hospital?

If you have to go back into hospital or need outpatient or day case procedures please let the ward or department know you have had MRSA.

Enclosed is an MRSA information card, you can use this to record that you have had MRSA and any treatment that you may have received. Then all you need to do is hand this card to hospital staff. This information is also in your medical notes to help make sure everyone is aware, enabling us to give you the correct treatment and care.

What measures does the Trust have in place to control the spread of MRSA?

The Trust is working hard to ensure that MRSA and other infections do not spread by ensuring high standards of hygiene and cleaning.

If you find anything that concerns you in our hospitals please tell us. If you want to know if someone's washed their hands — it's OK to ask!

If you are in hospital, good basic hand hygiene precautions using the alcohol hand gel should be followed by your visitors as part of the general approach to hospital hygiene.

It is not usually necessary for visitors to wear aprons and gloves. People with MRSA are not a risk to visitors or family members (including children and pregnant women).

I am in hospital and have MRSA—can I send my personal clothing home to be washed?

Yes. Ask the ward staff to place your clothes in a plastic bag. The clothes can be washed at the highest temperature the care label allows. The plastic bag should be discarded and the person handling the clothes and the bag should wash and dry their hands thoroughly.

I have MRSA and in hospital—what will happen when I go home?

As soon as your general condition allows, you can go home. The presence of MRSA in itself should not delay this.

Infection Prevention and Control Team

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Contact times: Office hours 08.00 to 16.30, Monday to Friday.

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We use the BT Text Relay service for patients who are deaf or have hearing difficulties. To contact us ring 18001 01274 364049

Information compiled by the Infection Prevention and Control Team

Publication date: March 2013

Review date: March 2015

MID Ref: 12103015