

MRSA – Screening before coming into hospital

Information for Patients, Relatives and Carers and Visitors

Bradford Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is committed to reducing the risk of MRSA infection and is following guidance from the Department of Health to screen all patients for MRSA before they are admitted to hospital for surgery or other procedures.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus. This is a type of Staphylococcus (Staph) aureus bacteria (germ) which is resistant to commonly used antibiotics.

Up to 25% (1 in 4) of people carry Staph aureus on their skin or in their nose. A much smaller number (3 to 6%) carry MRSA.

What problems can Staph aureus cause?

Usually Staph 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 Staph aureus and causes the same range of infections. What makes MRSA different is its resistance to antibiotics. There are effective antibiotics but some are more difficult to give (injection only) or may cause side effects. This makes the spread of MRSA in hospitals more concerning.

Why do we screen for MRSA?

If you are carrying MRSA we can reduce the chance of this causing infection when you come into hospital and reduce the risk of it spreading to other patients.

How do you screen for MRSA?

Swabs will be taken from your nose, and in some cases from armpits and groins. Swabs will also be taken from any wounds or skin lesions you may have.

Swab results will be available 3 to 4 days after they have been taken.

What happens if the screening is negative?

If your screening results are negative you will not be contacted and will not require any treatment.

There is a small chance that the swabs taken may fail to identify MRSA even if you are a carrier.

This may happen if the number of MRSA bacteria present on your body is very small. It is possible that if you are swabbed again in the future, MRSA may be identified.

What will happen if the result is positive?

You and your GP will be contacted. You will need to start treatment with an antiseptic nasal ointment or gel and a body wash. You will be sent information about how to get the treatment and how to use it.

This antiseptic treatment does not get rid of every MRSA germ but it reduces their numbers. This reduces the risk that MRSA will cause you any problems during and after your surgery or procedure.

If I am positive when should I use the treatment?

The treatment needs to be used for 5 days before the date of your operation or procedure. The nasal ointment will then stop after the 5 days, however the body washes will continue throughout your admission. **Please can you bring this in with you.**

Failure to use the treatment may cause a delay in your procedure/surgery.

If I am positive 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.

Need further information?

If you have any further queries please contact the Pre-assessment Clinic your Consultant or the Infection Prevention and Control Team.

Smoking

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke-free organization. You are not permitted to smoke in any of the hospital buildings or grounds.

Wristbands

When you are in hospital it is essential to wear a wristband at all times to ensure your safety during your stay. The wristband will contain accurate details about you on it including all of the essential information that staff need to identify you correctly and give you the right care. All hospital patients including babies, children and older people should wear the wristband at all times.

If you do not have a wristband whilst in hospital, then please ask a member of staff for one. If it comes off or is uncomfortable, ask a member of staff to replace it.