

# Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

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## What is MRSA?

There are lots of micro-organisms (germs) on our skin and in the air that we breathe, the water we drink and the food that we eat. Most of them are harmless, some are beneficial and a very small proportion can cause harm.

*Staphylococcus aureus* is one of these common germs, and can be found on the skin and inside the nostrils of approximately a third of the population.

*Staphylococcus aureus* can cause harm if it enters the body, for example through cuts and sores.

Meticillin is a type of penicillin, an antibiotic that is used to treat infections. MRSA stands for **M**eticillin **R**esistant **S**taphylococcus **A**ureus. MRSA are types of *Staphylococcus aureus* that have developed resistance to meticillin and some other antibiotics used to treat common infections.

MRSA has the potential to spread if not dealt with effectively.

Some people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nostrils quite harmlessly. This can be for a few days / weeks or months at a time.

Individuals don't know they carry MRSA because they have no symptoms and it does not cause them any harm. This is called 'colonisation'.

## How will I know if I have MRSA?

If you attend the Pre-Assessment Clinic prior to coming in for elective surgery, swabs may be taken from your nose, groin and possibly wounds for screening in the laboratory.

If you have been admitted as an emergency (unplanned), all patients are screened within 24 hours of arrival in line with hospital policy.

If MRSA is found from the swabs the nurse takes, you will be informed by a member of the Infection Prevention Team or clinic staff, depending on where your screens were taken.

If your result is confirmed positive it will indicate MRSA has been isolated on your skin at the time of screening and you will need to complete a course of decolonisation treatment to treat it.

## Could it be a problem if I have MRSA?

In certain cases, MRSA can cause infection if it is able to gain access to the body through a break in the skin. e.g. a surgical wound or leg ulcer.

An infected wound will take longer to heal and may become red and sore.

A small number of patients may develop more serious complications which are assessed and treated as required.

## How does MRSA spread?

If people have MRSA on their hands, they can transfer it to people and objects they touch. Other people can then pick it up on their hands and pass it on to others.

How do hospital staff stop MRSA spreading? Hospital staff use standard precautions with all patients, including those who have MRSA, in order to stop infection spreading to other people.

## **Simple hygiene measures reduce the risk of spreading MRSA**

- Everyone should clean their hands before and after touching patients
- Hands should be cleaned with soap and water or alcohol hand rubs
- Staff will wear gloves and aprons when caring for a patient who has MRSA
- Patients who are known to have MRSA may be moved to a single room.

## **How do you treat MRSA?**

Patients who have MRSA can be given treatment.

If you have been diagnosed as having a MRSA infection then antibiotics will be used to treat it. Our hospital has policies for the treatment of MRSA; however any treatment will depend on your condition, what procedure you are planned to have and will vary if you have any allergies.

Please ask to speak to an Infection Prevention nurse or your doctor if you have any questions regarding your treatment.

If you have been identified as having MRSA present on your skin (via a swab), body wash and nasal ointment will be prescribed for you to use for five days.

Anybody identified as having MRSA will be monitored by the Infection Prevention Team whilst they are an inpatient.

## **Will I have to stay in hospital until the MRSA has cleared?**

If MRSA is found on your skin, you do not usually have to stay in hospital any longer than expected and you can continue any topical treatments at home.

If you have been diagnosed as having an MRSA infection, you may have to stay in hospital and complete a course of antibiotics.

This means your discharge may be delayed until your infection has shown signs of resolving and it is safe to send you home.

Your treatment may need to continue once you are able to go home.

## **How will this affect my visitors?**

MRSA does not usually affect healthy people. It does not usually harm elderly people, pregnant women, children or babies.

However it can affect people who have serious health problems, and those with chronic skin conditions or open wounds.

Visitors can reduce the risk of spreading MRSA to other people if they do not sit on the beds and if they clean their hands after visiting.

## **How to use the skin decolonisation preparations Octenisan® Body Wash and mupirocin (Bactroban™ Nasal)**

The purpose of this treatment is to try and rid the body of the germ that has caused boils or other infections. However, in order for the treatment to be effective it is important that the preparations are used according to the following instructions.

**Octenisan® Body Wash** (use for five days once a day)

- Do **NOT** apply to dry skin.
- Do **NOT** dilute body wash beforehand in water as this will reduce its ability to work effectively – apply directly to wet skin on a flannel or sponge.
- Body wash should remain in contact with the skin for about a minute before being rinsed off.

- It is important to ensure that the product is rinsed off the skin and the skin is dried properly, especially for people with skin conditions.
- Towels should be for individual use and changed daily.
- Pay particular attention to armpits, groin, under breasts, hands and buttocks.

### Mupirocin (Bactroban™ Nasal Ointment)

- Use three times a day for five days.
- Apply a pea-sized amount (less for a small child) on the end of a cotton bud or the tip of your little finger to the inner surface of each nostril and massage gently upwards. Do not push the cotton bud up your nose.

The Infection Prevention Team is available if you have any questions.

### Further Information

Please discuss with an Infection Prevention & Control Nurse.

The Infection Prevention & Control Team

Tel: 01493 453136

### Feedback

We want your visit to be as comfortable as possible. Please talk to the person in charge if you have any concerns. If the ward/ department staff are unable to resolve your concern, please ask for our Patient Advice and Liaison (PALS) information. Please be assured that raising a concern will not impact on your care. **Before you leave the hospital you will be asked to complete a Friends and Family Test feedback card.** Providing your feedback is vital in helping to transform NHS services and to support patient choice.

### Trust Values

#### Courtesy and respect

- A welcoming and positive attitude
- Polite, friendly and interested in people
- Value and respect people as individuals  
So people feel **welcome**

#### Attentively kind and helpful

- Look out for dignity, privacy & humanity
- Attentive, responsive & take time to help
- Visible presence of staff to provide care  
So people feel **cared for**

#### Responsive communication

- Listen to people & answer their questions
- Keep people clearly informed
- Involve people  
So people feel **in control**

#### Effective and professional

- Safe, knowledgeable and reassuring
- Effective care / services from joined up teams
- Organised and timely, looking to improve  
So people feel **safe**



The hospital can arrange for an interpreter or person to sign to assist you in communicating effectively with staff during your stay. Please let us know.

**For a large print version of this leaflet, contact PALS 01493 453240**