



## MRSA - Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

### What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacteria commonly found on the skin and in the nostrils of about a third of healthy people and it can cause infections in some people. MRSA was first found in the 1960's and are varieties of *Staphylococcus aureus* that have developed resistance to Meticillin (drugs such as Penicillin and Flucloxacillin) and some other antibiotics that are used to treat infections.

### Who can get MRSA?

Some people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nostrils. They are described as being colonised with MRSA. Some people carry MRSA for a few hours or days, while others carry it for weeks or months. People are unaware that they carry MRSA because it does not harm them and they have no symptoms, unlike people who are infected with MRSA.

### How can MRSA be detected?

All patients admitted to hospital are screened for MRSA; a nurse will take swabs to check which parts of the body have been colonised.

### Why is MRSA a problem?

MRSA can cause harm when it gets an opportunity to enter the body. It can cause simple local infections such as pimples and boils, or more serious problems such as wound infections, chest infections or blood stream infections.

### How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is usually spread by touch. If a person gets MRSA on their hands, they can pass it to people and things that they touch. It may be picked up and passed on to others. If MRSA is in the nose or chest, it can be spread by coughing or sneezing.

- MRSA can spread to other patients. Hospital staff need to take special precautions when caring for patients who have MRSA in order to stop it spreading. Where possible a patient who has MRSA will be nursed in a room on their own. Hands can be cleaned with soap and water, or an alcohol hand gel. Staff will wear gloves and aprons when they care for a patient who has MRSA

### Can MRSA be treated?

Treatment with antiseptic body wash and a nasal ointment can help to reduce or remove MRSA from skin and nostrils.



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## Can my washing be sent home?

Yes – Laundry can still be taken home. When clothes are washed with detergent, MRSA is removed in a 30°C wash. However, wash soiled/dirty laundry separately (at 60°C if the fabric will withstand this temperature). Tumble drying will also kill MRSA.

## What about my family?

MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems, particularly people who have chronic skin conditions or open wounds. Ask for advice if someone who has a long-term health problem wants to visit a patient who has MRSA.

Visitors can reduce the possibility of spreading MRSA to other people if they do not sit on the bed and if they clean their hands at the end of the visit.

## Will this mean a longer stay in Hospital?

Patients who carry MRSA do not usually have to stay longer in hospital. If you require a nurse at home, your district nurse will be told if you still have MRSA. Once you go home there will be no need for any special precautions, unless specified, other than good hygiene measures such as hand washing.

A patient who is going to a nursing home or residential home can be cared for safely using simple good hygiene measures.

## Do I need to tell anyone I have or have had MRSA?

There are some incidences when you need to tell the doctors or nurses caring for you:

- On admission to hospital or before an outpatients appointment.
- Before visiting your General Practitioner (GP) or practice nurse for dressing changes
- Before admission to a residential or nursing home.

## Further information can be found from:

- Ward based infection control link networker
- NHS [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)
- MRSA Action <http://mrsaactionuk.net>

From 1st January 2019 smoking will not be permitted on any NHS site in England. Smoking will not be permitted within any of our buildings or anywhere outside on our sites. Smoking facilities will not be provided. Please be considerate of others when vaping in hospital grounds.

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

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