

PATIENT INFORMATION

The Facts about MRSA

What is MRSA?

Micro-organisms (germs, bacteria) are all around us but the only way we can see them is through a microscope.

We all carry millions of them both on and inside our bodies. They generally do us no harm at all - in fact most bacteria protect us from infections, but can sometimes cause infections.

One of these bacteria is called **Staphylococcus aureus** and over 30% of the population carry this on their skin or up their noses, causing no problem at all.

MRSA stands for **Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus**. This is a **Staphylococcus aureus** bacterium that can no longer be treated by some commonly used antibiotics.

MRSA can just live happily on the body causing you no problems. This is called colonisation, but if it gets into a wound it can prove more difficult to treat than some other infections.

Where is MRSA found?

MRSA is most commonly found on people in their nose, armpits, groins, throat and wounds. MRSA can also survive in dust.

How did I acquire MRSA?

It can be difficult to determine how a patient may get it, but there are several ways. These are:-

1. You could have had MRSA on your skin or in your nose before admission to hospital. This is becoming more common as it is frequently found in the community.
2. You may have acquired it through close contact with someone looking after you. However careful you are, and however much you wash, transfer of bacteria from one person to another can happen.
3. You could have required frequent prescriptions of antibiotics and bacteria you normally carry in your body have built up antibiotic resistance.

Why do I need to be in a single room?

Outside the health care setting, MRSA is not a problem, but in the hospital there are patients with wounds and sick people who are more susceptible to infections. This is why we may place you in a single room during your stay to prevent the spread of MRSA this will depend on the ward or hospital to which you are admitted.

What treatment will I get if I have MRSA?

If you are positive for MRSA whilst in hospital or due for surgery a doctor may prescribe washing lotions and nasal ointment to suppress the amount of the MRSA on your skin.

Will the staff treat me differently?

No! The only difference is that staff will wear aprons and gloves when caring for you. If they come in just to talk with you or deliver your meals, no precautions are necessary. However, staff will need to wash their hands before entering and leaving your room.

What if I require treatment from another department?

This will not interfere with the care you require, i.e. X-rays, physiotherapy. The staff from these departments will know the precautions they need to take.

Are my visitors at risk?

No! Visitors do not need aprons and gloves but should wash and dry their hands thoroughly on leaving the room. Any cuts should be covered. If they are visiting another person in hospital they should visit them first.

What about when I go home?

This is not a problem; MRSA does not usually harm healthy people including elderly people, pregnant women, children and babies. Therefore you can get back to living a normal life and not worry about the MRSA. If you have any concerns regarding friends or family who have long term health problems please contact the infection control team for advice. You are no more likely to get an infection than anyone else. However if you do need antibiotics from your GP in the future, it is worth mentioning you have had MRSA previously.

What if I have to come back into hospital?

Should this need arise, we may have to put you in a single room. We will also screen you again for MRSA and see if you are still carrying it.

Patient Records

The fact that you have had MRSA will be recorded in your electronic patient record. This may result in additional tests being done prior to or during any future visits to hospital/healthcare setting.

Remember, this bacterium has been around for years, the only difference is it has learnt to stand up for itself against some antibiotics!

References:

- Coia J.E. et al (2006). Guidelines for the control and prevention of Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in healthcare facilities.
- Joint BSAC/HIS/ICNA UK Working Party Journal of Hospital Infection 2006 63 Supplements, Revised Guidelines for the Control of Meticillin – Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* in Healthcare facilities.

If you have any questions about the information in this leaflet, please contact:
The Infection Control Support Department ☎ Tel. (01803) 655757
and speak to one of the Infection Control Nurses

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.