

## Infection Prevention and Control

# Meticillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (M.R.S.A). Information for patients and relatives

You may have been told you have MRSA. This leaflet has been produced to help you understand what is meant by this and to answer some of your questions.

### What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin (M) Resistant (R) Staphylococcus (S) Aureus (A). It is a germ that may be harmlessly carried on the skin and in the nose of about 3% of the population. People who have MRSA on their bodies, or in their noses, but who are unharmed by it, are described as being colonised.

### What problems can MRSA cause?

MRSA can cause problems if it gets the opportunity to enter the body. This is more likely to happen to people who are already unwell, have wounds, a drip or a drain. MRSA can cause abscesses, boils or can infect wounds. These are called local infections.

Sometimes local infections may spread into the body and cause serious infections such as Blood Poisoning. In hospital the main concern is that the germ is resistant to some of the more commonly used antibiotics, although alternative antibiotics are available to treat MRSA, but in most cases are not needed.

### How did I get MRSA?

It is difficult to say where you acquired MRSA as this germ is found in the community as well as in hospitals.

### How did you find the germ?

Sometimes your doctor or nurse will purposely look for the germ: for example before operations or if you have carried this germ before. Some patients that are admitted via the emergency route will also have a MRSA screen taken depending on what ward they will be admitted to. Sometimes it is found during the routine investigations we perform as part of your care.

### Can I get rid of the germ?

Whilst in hospital you may be given an antiseptic wash to use daily along with a special cream for your nose. If the germ has entered your body and is causing an infection, your doctor may need to prescribe antibiotics.



# Patient Information

## **How does this germ spread?**

Like most germs MRSA spreads easily on unwashed hands. We therefore encourage staff, visitors and patients to wash their hands. Staff may wear gloves or protective aprons whilst caring for you depending on the care they are giving you.

## **Will the germ make me feel unwell?**

Usually people do not feel unwell, but like any germ it can cause an infection. Most people suffer no ill effects from this germ and are totally unaware of its presence.

## **Can I stay on the same ward?**

Yes, but you may be nursed in a single room whilst the germ is present. If a single room is not available you may be asked to move to a single room on another ward. This will be avoided if possible. If there are several patients with the same germ, you may be nursed in a shared same sex bay.

## **Can I have visitors?**

Your friends and family may continue to visit you. They do not need to wear gloves or plastic aprons whilst visiting unless involved in hands on nursing care. Encourage your visitors to wash their hands when they arrive and before they go home.

Advice for safe laundering of clothing and soiled items should be sought from your ward nurse

## **What happens when I am ready to leave hospital?**

Having MRSA should not delay your discharge. If you need a district nurse they will be informed. You do not need to take any special precautions when you get home.

## **What if I need to come into hospital again?**

If you are admitted to any hospital in the future, you should always tell your nurses and doctors that you have had the MRSA germ

**If you wish to speak to the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses about any issues relating to MRSA please ask the nurse looking after you.**

**The Infection Prevention and Control Nurses are available, Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 5.00pm to speak to you or your family. Contact us on telephone number 024 7696 4791.**

Other leaflets produced by the Infection Prevention and Control Team include:

- Isolation and Barrier Nursing
- ESBL
- Clostridium difficile

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact 024 7696 4791 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke free policy

**Document History – Author:** Mel Gallo **Department:** Infection Prevention Control **Contact:** 024 7696 4791 **Published:** September 2006 **Reviewed:** January 2019 **Review:** January 2021 **Version:** 8  
**Reference:** HIC/LFT/161/06