

Are my friends and family at risk of getting MRSA?

It is possible to pass MRSA on to people you are in close contact with, even when you are at home. This is why we ask your visitors to follow the advice given by the nurses. MRSA is very unlikely to cause any harm to healthy people and it will probably not survive long on them.

However, we would advise that your friends and relatives consult the ward staff before visiting you if they:

- are due to come into, or be admitted to hospital for any procedure
- have open wounds / other damaged skin, or tubes in their body, such as for feeding, medicine or to help them pass urine
- are taking long term antibiotics

In any of these circumstances they should seek further advice before visiting and inform their doctor that they have been in contact with you. For more information please feel free to contact the hospital infection prevention team, who can be reached through the ward staff.

Will I have to stay in hospital because of the MRSA?

Most patients who are colonised with MRSA can leave hospital once the original reason for admission has been dealt with.

You will only remain in hospital if MRSA causes an infection that needs hospital treatment.

If you need to continue treatment when you go home, your nurse or the Infection Control Nurse will tell you about any special precautions you will need to take.

Can MRSA return after treatment?

Yes, MRSA can return after treatment. Sometimes it is not completely removed and might re-grow. To prevent this from happening, you should keep your standard of personal hygiene high. Please shower or bath and wash your hair regularly. Please avoid touching broken skin, wounds or any tubes you might have in your body.

If you are admitted to any hospital in the future, please tell the staff that you have had MRSA. You will need to be tested to make sure the MRSA has cleared before you have any procedures or operations.

How can I get more information?

More information about MRSA is available by:

- asking the ward staff
- calling the infection control team on 020 7188 3153 (9am -5pm) – this team is made up of specially trained nurses who advise doctors, nurses and other hospital staff on how to control and prevent the spread of infection
- visiting the NHS Choices website at www.nhs.uk

If you do not understand this leaflet, we can arrange an interpreter, or if you require this leaflet in large print format or on audiotape, please call 020 7188 8815 to request this.

Useful Contacts

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)

e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language Support Services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch:

t: 020 7188 8815

e: languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

NHS 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Contact us

www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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Dealing with MRSA

A guide for patients

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is a common type of bacteria. It lives on the skin and in the nose of many people without doing any harm. Like many bacteria, staphylococcus aureus only becomes a problem if you are run-down, ill, injured or have had surgery. It can cause infections if it enters the body, such as through wounds or tubes placed in the body.

Methicillin is an antibiotic. Antibiotics are used to treat infections caused by bacteria.

Methicillin resistant means that methicillin cannot kill the bacteria and another antibiotic will need to be used.

If methicillin cannot be used to treat staphylococcus aureus, it is called MRSA.

What is the cause of MRSA?

Antibiotics have been used for many years to successfully treat infections. However, when people do not finish a course of antibiotics as prescribed, it is likely that not all of the germs that caused the infection have been killed. The germs that survive develop a resistance to the antibiotic and multiply. As more antibiotics are used, the number of germs that are able to resist them have become more common.

How did I get MRSA?

You may have got MRSA before you came into hospital or during your stay in hospital.

MRSA is more common in hospitals than anywhere else. Patients in hospital are more vulnerable to infections, such as MRSA.

This is because they may have a weakened immune system, or have wounds or burns, or tubes placed in their bodies.

How will MRSA affect me?

MRSA can cause **colonisation** or **infection**.

If you have MRSA on your skin or nose and it is doing no harm, this is known as colonisation. People who are colonised will have no signs or symptoms of infection and feel fine.

An infection means that germs are in or on your body and may make you feel sick. MRSA might cause a mild infection, such as pus or redness at a wound site. It may also cause a more serious infection, such as septicaemia (infection of the blood).

How can you tell who has MRSA?

You cannot tell who has MRSA by looking at them. This is why we routinely test our patients for it. This involves sending samples to our laboratory to be tested. These samples could include:

- a swab of your nose, throat and perineum
- a swab of an infected wound
- blood ● urine.

It takes about three days for the test results to be ready.

Can MRSA be treated?

Yes, MRSA can be treated. We will need to take swabs from you regularly to check the progress of the treatment. You might have to continue with the treatment for an extended period of time until the MRSA has cleared.

If you are **colonised** with MRSA you may be given an antiseptic wash and an ointment. This helps to remove MRSA from the nose and skin and reduces the risk of MRSA spreading to other parts of your body or to other patients.

If you have an **infection** from MRSA, antibiotics, other than methicillin, can be used. You will be given antibiotics either by injection or orally.

How can the spread of MRSA be controlled?

You will be moved to a separate room, either on your own or with patients who also have MRSA. This is to prevent the spread of MRSA to other patients.

Staff will wash their hands or use alcohol gel before and after they care for you. They will also wear gloves and gowns during your care, to prevent MRSA from being carried on their clothes to other patients.

It is important that you follow the advice given by your nurse.

MRSA is mainly passed on by human contact. Washing your hands is the best way to prevent the spread of MRSA. You should have received the leaflet, **Help us to protect you – Promoting hand hygiene**. If you have not, please ask your nurse for a copy. When you are in hospital you can help by:

- cleaning your hands before meals. If you are not near a sink, please use the hand rub at your bedside
- washing your hands with soap and water after using the toilet or commode
- encouraging your visitors to clean their hands before and after visiting you – alcohol hand rub is available at the entrance to every ward
- asking the staff caring for you to clean their hands before examining you
- reporting any unclean toilet or bathroom facilities to a member of staff
- telling your nurse if your bed is not clean.

Can I still have visitors?

Yes, you can have visitors, as long as they are not patients in the hospital. MRSA does not affect healthy people, but can be harmful to people who are sick. To prevent the spread of MRSA, please ask your visitors to follow the advice given by the nurses.

Your visitors should wash their hands or use the alcohol rub before and after visiting you. If they help with your care, they will be asked to wear gloves and aprons.