



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

Some of your questions answered

Issued by the Infection Control Team

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ that is found on the skin and in the nostrils of about a third of healthy people.

MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus aureus that has developed resistance to meticillin and some other antibiotics used to treat common infections.

Most people are unaware that they may carry MRSA or any other type of Staphylococcus aureus because it doesn't harm them and they have no symptoms.

MRSA can cause infection if it enters the body, for example through cuts, sores, urinary catheters and intravenous lines (drips).

How do people get MRSA?

MRSA is usually spread by touch. If a person gets MRSA on their hands they can pass it to people and the things that they touch.

Careful and thorough hand washing by you, staff, and relatives is very important and will help prevent it passing to others.

What happens when I come into hospital?

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust actively swabs patients in key areas for MRSA as well as swabbing those patients who have previously been identified as an MRSA carrier. It is for this reason that some patients are swabbed before coming in to hospital as part of their pre-assessment care.

MRSA screening (swabbing)

There are no risks to being swabbed. The swab takes the form of placing a cotton bud onto the areas of the skin (nose and groin) where we know MRSA is commonly found. If you have any wounds, a urinary catheter or an intravenous line (drip) these may be swabbed too. These swabs are then sent to the microbiology lab for testing.

Knowing that someone has MRSA means we can take precautions and prevent MRSA spreading. It also enables your clinical team to tailor your treatment and care correctly.

There are no alternatives to being swabbed. Although if you have been identified as having MRSA in the past, your hospital nurse will start you on some treatment (a body wash) straight away.

What happens if I have MRSA in hospital?

If your swabs show you have MRSA you will be treated with antiseptic body wash and nasal cream which reduce or remove MRSA from hair, skin and nostrils.

Hospital staff need to take special precautions with patients who have MRSA in order to stop it spreading. You will see that staff will wear gloves and aprons when directly caring for a patient with MRSA.

If you have an MRSA infection it is usually treated with antibiotics.

What happens when I go home?

Having MRSA will not stop you going home.

MRSA screening (swabbing) is not necessary when you are at home. If you are readmitted to hospital it is important that you tell staff you have had MRSA in the past.

What precautions should I take at home if I have MRSA?

- Cover all cuts and grazes with a waterproof dressing.
- Regular hand washing with liquid soap will help to stop the spread of infection. Have your own towel; don't share it with other people.
- Any carers who carry out intimate care for someone with MRSA should be given advice and training by a healthcare professional.
- Keeping the home environment clean (this includes any toilet or bath aids) will help to keep the germ from establishing itself in the environment.
- Good hand hygiene is required before preparing food and drinks.
- Carers who have MRSA should wash their hands before and after direct contact with a patient.
- If you have any further questions or concerns once you are home contact your GP or district nurse for further help.

Contacts

If you require any further information or need to speak to someone you can contact either the hospital or community infection control teams on 0344 811 8111.

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk



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