



MRSA INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS, RELATIVES AND CARERS

What is MRSA?

MRSA is short for Meticillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* is a type of germ which often found in one out of 100 healthy people in nose or skin. Only in few occasions it may lead to serious infections such as blood, joints and wound infections

Is MRSA a problem in the community?

MRSA is not a problem to fit healthy people, children or pregnant women. However, people staying in hospital, receiving treatment and undergoing investigations are more at risk. Also people who have long-term skin lesions (such as leg ulcers), long-term urinary catheters and for those receiving frequent courses of antibiotics.

How can you get MRSA?

Often it is difficult to determine how someone gets MRSA. It can be acquired both in the community as well as the hospital. It is usually spread by human contact, and can easily be transferred by hand contact. It can also be found in the environment or on equipment used by people carrying the germ if cleanliness standards are not maintained. Some people may have MRSA and be unaware of it.

Problems may arise when the MRSA gets the opportunity to enter the body to cause an infection. This can happen after surgery or if patient has a device such as a bladder catheter, a feeding or breathing tube (tracheostomy), or where there are leg ulcers or bedsore.

MRSA is more likely to colonise people with skin conditions such as eczema or psoriasis.

Infection is more likely to occur where a person is already unwell for example, when receiving chemotherapy. Extra care should always be taken when caring for the skin, so that the protective barrier is maintained.

Can I pass it on to others?

In the community, MRSA presents a very low risk indeed and you should proceed with all your activities as normal. You are generally in contact with other people who are fit and well, so there is no risk of passing MRSA on. If you have any wounds they should be covered with waterproof dressings to protect yourself and others.

You are encouraged to have people to visit as well as to visit others in their own homes. If you are concerned about certain individuals such as those on chemotherapy or skin conditions such as eczema, please contact the Infection Control Team for advice. You can continue to have a normal life and maintain your usual relationship with your partner. Transmission is usually through:

- Direct skin contact with one of those infected,
- touching surfaces on which bacteria spherical cluster because of a infection of other persons
- Infection is not transmitted through the air except in cases of eczema or psoriasis.

Can it be treated?

Yes. The type of treatment will depend on where the MRSA has been found. These may include a cream for the nose or antiseptic skin wash. Sometimes antibiotics are required.

What easiest way to prevent MRSA infection?

Hand washing is the easiest way to prevent infection or if hand looks clean, you can use alcohol hand rub.

When should I wash my hands?

- After using the toilet or after cleaning the bathroom or change the bed or wash your clothes
- Before preparing food, eating or drinking
- Each time you come into contact with other people or with surfaces or tools used by others.
- After touching any material contaminated with body fluids such as wound dressings or bedding.
- Before exercise or sports or training
- After sneezing, coughing or blowing. Before and after touching open sores and skin rashes.

What can I do to stop the spread?

Being discharged from home or care facility is an important step on the road to recovery.

You and your family may be worried about being at home in view of the strict measures that may have been practices while you were in hospital. These measures were aimed at controlling and reducing the spread of all germs, not just MRSA, to other vulnerable patients who are at risk because of their illness or surgery.

At home these risks are reduced but it is important that you continue to follow good basic housekeeping and personal hygiene. Keep wounds and abrasion clean and covered with a bandage until healed.

The Infection Control Directorate has produced this leaflet