

Patient Information

A Guide to Meticillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)



What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for "Meticillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus". There are lots of different types of families of germs found on the human body and in the environment around us. One of these families of germs is called Staphylococcus aureus. MRSA belongs to this family. Staphylococcus aureus is a very common bacteria that lives on the skin and usually causes no harm, but sometimes it can cause infection. MRSA is a strain of Staphylococcus aureus that is resistant to several antibiotics. If the bacteria stay in the nose or on the skin surface they will cause no harm, but if they enter the body through a wound or a break in the skin they may cause infection. All patients have samples taken on admission to hospital to identify if they are carrying MRSA. These are from the nose, wounds and samples of wee if applicable.

How did I get MRSA?

Around 30% of healthy people carry Staphylococcus aureus. MRSA can be found in the home and in the community in general, as well as in clinics and hospitals. We know that MRSA can be transferred by hand (direct contact) or via surfaces and machines (indirect contact). It is difficult to determine how each individual patient gets MRSA. The MRSA may have been on your skin before you came into hospital.

How can MRSA be treated?

The treatment given will depend on where you have MRSA and this will be explained to you by your nurse. It may be treated with special cream for your nose and a body wash. The doctors may also need to prescribe antibiotics. The length of treatment will vary from person to person. To prevent spread to other patients you will be moved into a single side room or you will be moved into a bay with other patients who have the same type of MRSA. If you are placed in a side room we ask you not to have contact with other patients until advised by ward staff.

Hand Hygiene.

Hand hygiene is very important. The single most important way of preventing spread of MRSA is by hand washing or using alcohol hand gel. Alcohol hand gel is available at the doors of all wards for your visitors to use. Alcohol hand gel is available at your bedside for you and the health care workers to use at the point of care. You may not see staff use the alcohol hand gel at the entrances to wards but they must use it before and after contact with patients. Remember it's OK to ask our staff to clean their hands. Please ask your nurse for a copy of the patient hand hygiene leaflet, which shows you how and when to clean your hands.

Will I have to stay in hospital until the MRSA is cleared?

You will be sent home as soon as you are otherwise well enough, so the time you are in hospital should not be affected. If you are being transferred to another hospital you may need to wait a little longer until a side room is available. If you have not completed your treatment for MRSA before you go home, you will be given medicine to take with you. Your nurse will explain this before you are discharged.

Will this affect my family and friends?

MRSA does not normally cause harm to healthy people. If any of your visitors are directly involved in your care, for example helping you with washing or personal care, we would ask them to wear gloves and a plastic apron. It is not necessary for all visitors to wear aprons and gloves. There is a leaflet available for all visitors giving advice and guidance as how they can keep safe and help us to stop infection spreading.

Can MRSA come back?

MRSA can return after treatment has been stopped. If you come into hospital again you may be nursed in a single room while awaiting screen results.

What happens when I go home?

Having MRSA should not affect your normal daily activities or prevent you from going to work. If you have an open wound this should be kept covered whilst outside your home. It is important to wash your hands well before and after touching your wound.

It is important that you maintain good hand hygiene. Hand washing is the most important measure you can take. Clothes and bed linen should be washed at the highest temperature the fabric can withstand and tumble dried if possible.

There is no need to restrict your visitors, unless they are unwell.

Further information is available from:

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

We act on your behalf when handling patient and family concerns, liaising with staff, managers and where appropriate, relevant organisations to negotiate immediate or prompt solutions. We can also help you to get support from other local or national agencies.

Royal Shrewsbury Hospital, Tel: 0800 783 0057 or 01743 261691

Princess Royal Hospital, Tel: 01952 282888

Other Sources of Information

NHS 111

A fast and easy way to get the right help, whatever the time. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Telephone: 111 (free from a landline or mobile)

Website: www.nhs.uk

Patient UK

Provides leaflets on health and disease translated into 11 other languages as well as links to national support/self-help groups and a directory of UK health websites.

Website: www.patient.info

Self Help & Support Groups

A selection of websites providing access to good quality patient and consumer health information, covering specific age groups and conditions.

Also includes Shropshire Community Directory which contains up-to-date information on community groups, clubs, societies, organisations, support groups and self-help groups covering Shropshire and its borders.

Website: www.library.sath.nhs.uk/find/patients/

Information in Other Formats

Please contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team if you require this leaflet in a different language or large print. Contact number 01743261134.

Website: www.sath.nhs.uk

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