

## Discharge

Patients with MRSA can go home when they feel well enough and the doctors are satisfied with their recovery. There is no need for any special precautions. However, it is important to continue good personal hygiene. If you live with someone who may be vulnerable due to open wounds, skin conditions such as eczema or someone who is going to be having an operation soon, please ask for advice or discuss this further with the Infection Control Nurses. Please remember, if you are going to see your GP or coming back into hospital you should inform staff that you have had MRSA so that you can be re-tested.

## Prevention of MRSA

The hospital has a detailed plan for patients with MRSA, which includes:

- staff wearing gloves and aprons when caring for patients with MRSA
- staff following strict hand washing with alcohol gel or soap and water when looking after infected patients
- staff routinely swabbing patients on admission to hospital
- cleaning of bed spaces and isolation rooms where patients with MRSA have been nursed.

# Advice and Information

## Advocacy

We have an in-house health advocacy service for patients and carers who do not speak or read English.

## Patient Advice and Liaison Team (PALS)

PALS can provide information and support to patients and carers and will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries. Leaflets are available on the wards.

## Useful Contacts

If you have any further queries in relation to MRSA or infection control and prevention please ask one of the nursing staff to contact one of the infection control nurses or contact 020 8510 7557 directly.

Further information including all hospitals' MRSA rates can also be obtained from the Health Protection Agency website [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk)

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T 020 8510 5035

w [www.homerton.nhs.uk](http://www.homerton.nhs.uk)

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# Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA stands for methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria or germ. MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics – such as penicillin. This means that many commonly used antibiotics will not work against MRSA.

### **How is it spread?**

MRSA can be found in the nose and on the skin of some normal healthy people without developing an infection. This is known as being 'colonised'. If, however, the bacteria gets into the body through a break in the skin it can cause infection, commonly skin infections and boils. It is spread through direct contact, usually through vulnerable sites on the body, for example through wounds, catheters or intravenous lines/drips.

### **What are the symptoms?**

Most people with MRSA who are 'colonised' feel fine, have no symptoms and will not need any treatment. If, however, MRSA causes an infection, the symptoms can include:

- boils and abscesses
- fever
- chest or urine infections
- skin infections

MRSA can affect anyone, but normally causes problems for people who are already unwell as they are more vulnerable to infections.

Hospitals have large numbers of patients who are unwell and vulnerable to infections, which is why it is more common to develop MRSA in hospital.

### **Screening for MRSA**

To help control the spread of MRSA you may be screened on admission to the hospital or in the pre-assessment clinic. This involves taking swabs from the nose, throat and groin area and sending to the laboratory to test if MRSA is present. This is a painless procedure. If the swabs are positive and you are not yet in hospital you will be contacted and if necessary arrangements will be made for you to have treatment before being admitted. If you are in hospital, you will be given treatment and you may be moved to an isolation area.

### **How is it treated?**

If you have tested positive for MRSA but with no signs of infection – this is known as being 'colonised' – you will be asked to:

- wash your body and hair every day with an antibacterial soap
- put an antibacterial gel inside your nose three times a day
- have swabs taken every week to see if MRSA is still there. This will continue throughout your hospital stay or until you have had three sets of consecutive negative swabs.

If you have tested positive for MRSA and have signs of an infection you will also be prescribed antibiotics, commonly given via an intravenous drip.

### **Preventing spread of MRSA**

If you have been diagnosed with MRSA:

- You may be moved to a side room, however, in some cases you may remain on the ward in a bay area. This decision is taken by the Infection Control Nurses and will depend on the risks to you, other patients and visitors.
- You will need to make sure you follow your treatment plan.
- You will need to maintain good personal hygiene.

You do not represent a particular risk to healthy people including babies and pregnant women, so you can continue to have visitors.

### **Visiting someone with MRSA?**

If you are visiting someone in hospital who has MRSA:

- It is important that you clean your hands with the alcohol hand gel when entering and leaving the ward or side room. You will find this at every ward entrance.
- If you are helping in the care of the patient, for example with a dressing, you should wear gloves and an apron. Nursing staff will advise you on this.