
Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

This leaflet gives information about MRSA. If you have any questions, please speak to the staff member looking after you.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) bacteria that has become resistant to commonly used antibiotics, such as flucloxacillin. *S. aureus* normally lives harmlessly on the skin, especially in areas like the nostrils, groin and skin folds. About 30% of people carry *S. aureus* on their skin without any problems. Many people also carry MRSA on their skin or in their nose without making you unwell. This is called colonisation or carriage. In most cases MRSA does not cause harm. However, in some people, especially those with wounds or weakened immune systems, MRSA can cause infections. These can range from minor skin infections to more serious infections such as in the bloodstream. MRSA infections can be harder to treat because fewer antibiotics work against them.

How is it spread?

MRSA is mainly spread by hands. It can be passed on if staff or visitors have not cleaned their hands properly after contact with a colonised or infected person, or after touching contaminated equipment. This is why good hand hygiene is so important. MRSA can also be found in dust, so it is important to keep your bedspace, table, and locker tidy and free from clutter to allow thorough cleaning.

What are the signs and symptoms?

There are no signs and symptoms when you are colonised with MRSA. If MRSA causes infection, signs and symptoms will depend on where the infection is. For example, you may develop a fever if the infection is in the blood. The only way to confirm colonisation or infection caused by MRSA is through screening

How will I be screened for MRSA?

Sterile swabs are gently rubbed inside your nose and on the skin in your groin. If you have any wounds or devices, such as a urine catheter, a swab or sample will also be taken from these areas. The screening test is not painful and only takes a few seconds.

What happens if my result is positive?

If you are in hospital and are found to be colonised, or if you have an infection caused by MRSA, you may be moved into a single room to help prevent spread to other vulnerable patients. If a single room is not available, you may stay in the bay, but you will be asked to avoid walking around to help prevent spread. Staff will wear disposable gloves and a plastic apron when caring for you and will clean their hands with soap and water or alcohol hand rub. If you have an infection, you may need antibiotics. You may also be given a five-day decolonisation treatment, which usually includes medicated body wipes, a shower cap and a nasal ointment to reduce the MRSA on your skin and help prevent it spreading to others. If you have no symptoms and are simply colonised, you may only need the five-day decolonisation treatment.

Can I have visitors?

Yes. MRSA does not usually cause illness in healthy people, so visitors are a low risk. Visitors should clean their hands before and after touching you or your surroundings, and again when leaving the ward. They do not need to wear gloves or aprons unless they are helping with your personal care.

When can I go home?

You can go home when you are well enough to be discharged. If you have any concerns once you are home, you may contact your GP for advice.

Contact us

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.epsom-sthelier.nhs.uk or www.stgeorges.nhs.uk.

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care.

Tel: St Helier 020 8296 2508 / Epsom 01372 735243/ St. Georges 020 8725 2453

Email: ESTH est-tr.PALS@nhs.net / St Georges pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.



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