

# MRSA

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**This leaflet is for patients, relatives and visitors and explains what MRSA is, how we test for it and how it is managed / treated.**

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## What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus. This means that Meticillin (a type of antibiotic) does not kill these bacteria (germs), making infections with MRSA harder to treat. However, the majority of patients who develop MRSA are treated successfully with other antibiotics.

Most people with MRSA carry it without it causing any harm to themselves or their family; this is called colonisation.

## Who is at risk?

Those who are already ill, or have a condition that increases their risk of infection; those who have had a surgical operation; the elderly; or those who have had medical devices inserted in to their body, e.g. urinary catheters or central lines. These procedures can allow the bacteria to get from the skin into the body.

## How is it caught?

The bacterium is usually passed from person to person by hand-to-hand contact. More rarely, it can also travel through the air if the person has MRSA in their sputum (phlegm) or on skin scales (dry flakes of skin)

## How do I know that I have MRSA?

Swabs from your nose, throat, and or open wounds may be taken. It may also be necessary to take specimens of blood, urine or sputum. These will be processed in the laboratory.

## Can it be treated?

In order to minimise the risk of infection, some people are given nasal cream and a body and hair-wash solution to reduce the number of bacteria on their skin prior to certain procedures e.g. surgery.

Infection occurs when MRSA gets from your skin to somewhere else in your body where it can cause a problem. If this occurs, the doctor will prescribe appropriate antibiotics.

## Why are patients with MRSA nursed in isolation?

This helps to prevent the spread of the bacteria to other patients at risk of infection. Doctors, nurses and clinical staff will wear gloves and aprons when caring for you. If you have MRSA it is unlikely that you will be prevented from having treatments and tests, such as X-rays and physiotherapy, or operations if necessary.

## How can the spread of MRSA be reduced?

It is important that thorough hand decontamination is carried out by all staff and visitors.

## Can visitors catch MRSA?

Healthy people are at very little risk from MRSA. All visitors should clean their hands with alcohol rub when they enter or leave the ward. If your friend or relative has MRSA, you do not need to put on gloves or aprons. Never touch a wound or medical device, such as a drip or catheter.

## Going home from hospital

If you are otherwise well enough, your going home date will not be delayed. As healthy people are at very little risk from MRSA you can carry out your usual social activities and there are no special precautions that you should take. Hand washing and keeping the house clean in the usual way is all that you need. Clothing and bed linen should be washed as usual following washing instructions.

## Coming back to hospital

If you come back in to hospital, it is important to tell the nurses and doctors that you have had MRSA. We may then isolate you and screen you for MRSA (by taking swabs).

## Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about MRSA, please ask your nurse for further information or you can contact the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Infection Control team on 0118 322 6914, email: [infection.control@royalberkshire.nhs.uk](mailto:infection.control@royalberkshire.nhs.uk).

## How do I find out more?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mrsa/>

Health Protection Team Tel: 0344 225 3861 <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>

To find out more about our Trust visit [www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk](http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk)

**Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.**

Simon Wells, RBFT Infection Prevention & Control, October 2022

Next review due: October 2024