

Patients & Relatives

MRSA Information



Patient Information

What is MRSA?

MRSA is an abbreviation for methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (sometimes called multi-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) or commonly 'golden staph'.

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria (germ) which is in the nose and on the skin of healthy people. It is usually harmless but when it gets inside the body it may cause infection and require treatment with antibiotics. In some cases the bacteria can become resistant to the commonly used antibiotics which are no longer effective, hence the term "multi-resistant".

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is usually spread from one person to another through contact with the hands of a person who already has it on their skin. It is not normally spread through the air. You may have acquired MRSA before you came to hospital as there are community associated strains, or you may have acquired it in hospital.

Where is MRSA found?

MRSA can be found on the skin, in the nose or throat and in blood, urine or wounds.

Who is screened? What is the process?

Anyone who has been in another hospital or health care facility for more than 24 hours is screened for MRSA. Likewise another health care facility may request MRSA screening of a patient prior to the patient being transferred there.

People undergoing major surgery are also screened for MRSA.

People with a previous history of MRSA are also screened and MRSA precautions are left in place until they are cleared of MRSA.

Screening for MRSA involves swabs being taken from your nose, groin and any wounds. This process is painless and takes about five minutes to complete. The swabs are then sent to pathology for testing and this takes approximately 48 hours for results to be returned.

Until the swab results are returned MRSA precautions need to be taken when coming in contact with the patient or any patient items.


What if I catch it?

MRSA is generally not a problem in healthy individuals however it can become a problem for people who are very ill, immuno-suppressed, or people who are undergoing major surgery. People who have open wounds are also at risk as MRSA may impede wound healing.

How is MRSA treated?

MRSA infection is treated with different antibiotics to those used for sensitive strains, given either orally or by intravenous infusion.

What precautions are taken to prevent MRSA being spread?

- Staff will wash their hands immediately before and after attending the patient or use an alcohol based antibacterial hand rub
 - Staff will wear gloves and disposable plastic apron when attending to the patient which will be removed and disposed of immediately after attending the patient
 - The patient will be asked to limit their movement and stay in the allocated bed with the curtains drawn
 - A precautionary trolley will be assigned to the patient
 - The patient will be assigned their own dedicated medical equipment.
 - These precautions will continue if the patient is transferred to another facility or hospital.
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What happens when I go home?

- At home normal hygiene practices such as washing hands before eating and after using the toilet are advised.
- Do not share personal items such as towels, face washers, razors and clothing.
- No special requirements for washing linen and clothes, cutlery and crockery or cleaning toilets, baths or showers.
- If you are discharged to another healthcare facility or home with a community carer it is vital they know you have MRSA. This ensures they practice the appropriate precautions.

Key points to remember

- MRSA does not harm healthy people including pregnant women, children and babies
- Good hand hygiene is essential to prevent the spread of all germs.
- Always tell the doctors and nurses that you have had MRSA in the past should you require another admission to hospital.

If you have any questions please direct them to the nursing staff

REMEMBER PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

References

<http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/factsheets/general/methicillin.html>

http://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/bhcv2/bhcarticles.nsf/pages/Staphylococcus_aureus_golden_staph

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