

TO PROVIDE **THE VERY BEST CARE** FOR EACH PATIENT ON EVERY OCCASION

# Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

General Information

An information guide



# Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

## What is MRSA?

There are lots of micro-organisms (germs) on our skin and in the environment around us. Most of them are harmless, some are beneficial and a very small proportion can cause harm.

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a common germ that is found on the skin and in the nostrils of about a third of healthy people. It can cause infections. MRSA stands for Meticillin (M) resistant (R) Staphylococcus (S) aureus (A). MRSA are varieties of *Staphylococcus aureus* that have developed resistance to Meticillin (a type of penicillin) and some other antibiotics that are used to treat infections.

Some people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nostrils. They are described as being colonised with MRSA. Some people carry MRSA for a few hours or days, while others carry it for weeks or months. People are unaware that they carry MRSA because it does not harm them and they have no symptoms, unlike people who are infected with MRSA. MRSA can cause harm when it gets an opportunity to enter the body. It can cause simple local infections such as pimples and boils, or more serious problems such as wound infections, chest infections or blood stream infections.

MRSA and other germs cause problems in hospitals. This is because people who are ill are more vulnerable to infections. Complicated medical treatments including operations, and intravenous lines (drips) provide opportunities for germs to enter the body.

## **How do people get MRSA?**

MRSA is usually spread by touch. If a person gets MRSA on their hands, they can pass it to people and things that they touch. It may then be picked up and passed on to others.

## **How can you tell if someone has MRSA?**

People who carry MRSA do not look or feel different from anyone else and they do not have any symptoms. Patients who have an infection caused by MRSA may have signs and symptoms of infection. They develop a high temperature, or a fever, or their wound becomes red and sore and discharges pus. Many other germs can cause these signs and symptoms. Laboratory tests are carried out to find out which germs are causing infection.

## **What happens when a patient gets MRSA?**

MRSA can spread to other patients. Hospital staff need to take special precautions with patients who have MRSA in order to stop it spreading. Policies for treating patients who carry MRSA, or who have an MRSA infection, vary according to the local situation and the individual patients affected.

You can ask your nurse to contact the Infection Control Team about Trust policies.

## **How is MRSA treated?**

People who get MRSA can be treated. If a patient carries MRSA, a nurse may take swabs to check which parts of the body have MRSA. Treatment with antiseptic bodywash/shampoo, cream and mouthwash can help to reduce or remove MRSA from hair, skin, throat and nostrils.

A patient who has an MRSA infection is usually treated with antibiotics

Treatment for MRSA is only necessary if you need admission to hospital. There is no need to have repeated treatment for MRSA once discharged from hospital.

### **Can MRSA harm family and friends?**

MRSA does not usually harm healthy people, including elderly people, pregnant women, children and babies. MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems, particularly people who have chronic skin conditions or open wounds. Ask your nurse to contact the Infection Control Team for advice if someone who has a long-term health problem wants to visit a patient who has MRSA.

### **Do patients who get MRSA have to stay longer in hospital?**

Patients who carry MRSA do not usually have to stay longer in hospital. Patients who have an MRSA infection may have to stay in hospital until they have completed the course of antibiotics and their infection shows signs of clearing up. Alternatively, they may need to continue treatment when they go home.

A patient who is going to a nursing home or residential home can be cared for safely using simple hygiene measures.

### **Effective hand hygiene**

This is vital in preventing the spread of infections. There are 2 ways to cleanse your hands whilst in hospital.

1. using soap and water at a hand wash basin
2. using the alcohol rub which is available throughout the hospital.

## **Hand Washing**

This should always be done after using the toilet; emptying a drainage bag and before meals.

- wet hands before applying soap
- thoroughly lather all hand surfaces, and beneath rings
- rinse under running water before drying
- dry hands thoroughly with disposable towels.

## **Using Alcohol Hand Rubs**

- alcorub is available throughout the Trust as an alternative to handwashing
- apply alcorub to hands and rub over all areas of hands until it has evaporated
- please note this may affect artificial or varnished nails
- all visitors should use the rub on entering and leaving a ward area.

## **How can you help?**

Patients and visitors can reduce the possibility of spreading MRSA to other people if they support the following:

1. visitors do not sit on the bed
2. visitors clean their hands with the alcohol hand rub on entering the ward and at the end of the visit
3. if you have MRSA and you want to visit another patient in hospital, you should ask your nurse to contact the Infection Control Nurse for advice
4. avoid bringing in too many personal belongings as this hinders good cleaning practice

5. if you are attending a hospital and you have previously had MRSA, please notify a member of the nursing or medical team on arrival
6. please request that any staff who are attending to you (i.e. to check your wound, catheter or IV drip) use the alcohol rub first.

For further advice or support, please ask your nurse or doctor to contact a member of the Infection Control Team.



**If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Ethnic Health Team on 0161 627 8770**

اگر انگلش آپکی مادری زبان نہیں ہے۔ اور آپ بات چیت کرنے میں دقت محسوس کرتے ہیں۔ تو مدد کیلئے آپ ایتھنک ہیلتھ ٹیم سے نیچے دیئے ہوئے نمبر پر رابطہ کریں۔

若英語並非閣下的第一語言和需要幫忙的話，請致電 0161 627 8770 聯絡少數民族健康組。

ইংরেজী যদি আপনার মাতৃভাষা না হয় অথবা ইংরেজী বলতে ও বুঝতে আপনার অস্ববিধা হয় তাহলে এথনিক হেলথ টিমের সাথে নীচের টেলিফোন নাম্বারে যোগাযোগ করুন।

**0161 627 8770**

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Jeżeli angielski nie jest twoim pierwszym językiem i potrzebujesz pomocy proszę skontaktować się z załogą Ethnic Health pod numerem telefonu 0161 627 8770

**For general enquiries please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 0161 604 5897**

**For enquiries regarding clinic appointments, clinical care and treatment please contact 0161 620 0420 and the Switchboard Operator will put you through to the correct department / service**

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