

### Will i always be in isolation?

When repeated swabs are negative, you may be taken out of isolation, but this depends on the type of ward you are in. This also depends on the vulnerability of patients in your ward.

### Will it harm my relatives?

No. MRSA is not a problem for healthy people including children, though we do not recommend that very small babies visit you in hospital. It is ok to have direct contact with your visitors, e.g. holding hands, kissing and hugging.

If a relative or friend is coming into hospital in the near future or there are any members of your family with special problems that you are concerned about, ask to speak to the infection control nurses.

### When i leave hospital can i forget all about it?

When you go home, you can carry on with life as normal. No special precautions are necessary, although you must remember to continue to wash your hands carefully.

If you come back in to hospital please inform medical and nursing staff that you have had MRSA in the past. This is important, as it will ensure that you get the right treatment straight away. You will probably be isolated and swabs will be taken to see if you are still carrying MRSA.

The ward staff will inform your district nurses /practice nurses before you go home, but it is important to remind them yourself.

### Will i always have MRSA?

Some people get rid of MRSA very quickly, for others it takes much longer. Even if you have had negative swabs, MRSA can still be there as the number of germs can be so small that it cannot be detected.

It is important to remember that unless you are having any problems or are unwell and need to come into hospital, MRSA is not a problem.

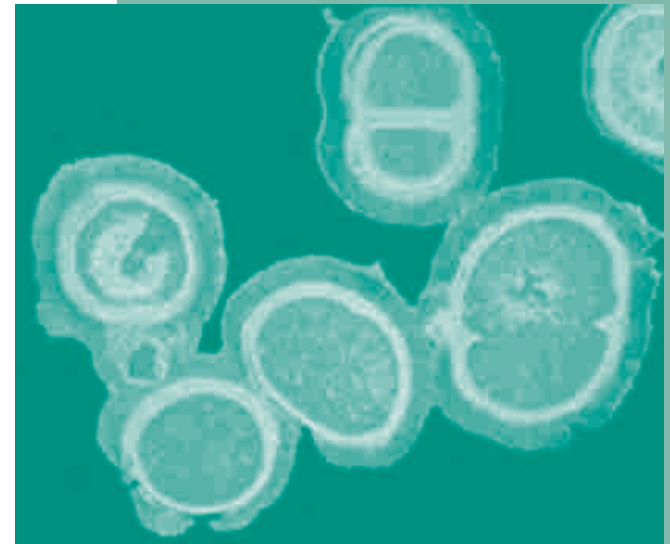
### If i need more information who can i speak to?

If nurses on the ward are not able to answer all your questions, you can ask them to contact the infection control nurses who will be able to give you more information about MRSA.

### Other sources of information are:

1. The Association of Medical Microbiologists publishes a leaflet called 'The facts about MRSA'. You can obtain a copy from their web-site.
2. The Centers for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, have information about MRSA for patients on their web-site.
3. Data on MRSA infections in England and Wales are available via the Infectious Disease section of the Health Protection Agency web-site.

# MRSA



INFORMATION LEAFLET  
for patients and relatives.

## What does MRSA stand for?

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus.

## What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a germ that is commonly found both in hospital and the community. MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus aureus that is resistant to some antibiotics commonly used to treat infections.

## How can it affect me?

Like almost all germs, MRSA can sometimes cause infection. Most of the time it lives like many other germs on the skin or in the nose and causes no harm. If there are no signs or symptoms to indicate that it is present, this is called colonisation.

For a minority of patients MRSA causes an infection, and then signs and symptoms are present. These may vary from person to person. The common signs of infection are listed below (NB these may not be caused by MRSA).

The most common symptoms for wound infections are redness, heat, swelling and pain. The wound may also leak.

For a chest infection the signs are a cough with spit and shortness of breath.

For a urinary tract infection the symptoms are having to pass urine often and it may cause discomfort. Your urine may also be cloudy and foul smelling.

Other signs of infection are a raised temperature, tiredness and generally feeling unwell.

In these cases special antibiotics are needed because the germ is more resistant than usual. Infection with MRSA is treatable using these antibiotics.

## How did i get MRSA?

MRSA has become a very common germ in most hospitals in the UK. We try very hard to prevent the spread of MRSA, but unfortunately sometimes we can't stop this from happening.

Some people are more vulnerable to MRSA e.g. people who suffer from a severe or long-standing illness, have to have surgery, have drips and drains or have to be in hospital for a long time. Some drugs, like steroids and antibiotics, may also increase the risk of getting MRSA.

MRSA is most commonly spread by direct contact from one person to another, usually on the hands. It can also spread from contaminated equipment. MRSA is rarely spread through the air though this may happen if the environment is very dusty and the air is being disturbed e.g. during bed making, dressing changes or if a fan is being used.

## How did we find out you had MRSA?

Swabs/specimens sent to the laboratory will have grown MRSA.

It can take up to three days until the results of MRSA specimens are ready.

## Can it be treated?

Yes. It is important to know that infections caused by MRSA are treatable with antibiotics. In most cases where MRSA is simply living on the skin or in the nose and not causing infection antibiotics are not necessary.

The treatment for this will be described in "What happens now?"

## What happens now?

You may either be isolated in a single room or nursed in an area with other MRSA patients. This is because it is easy for the germ to spread to other vulnerable patients.

We will ask you to help us prevent spread to other patients by taking some simple measures.

These are;

1. Stay in the room or area where you are being nursed.
  - If you want to leave the room or area you must discuss this with nursing staff.
  - You must wash and dry your hands carefully before leaving the room, if you have a wound the dressing must be clean, dry and secure.
  - You should not mix with other patients or have direct contact with them.
  - You may go outside the ward as long as you have discussed this with the ward staff.
2. You may be asked to wash with a special liquid soap and use a cream for your nose. If you cannot manage this yourself the nurses will help you. This is to reduce the amount of MRSA on your body.
3. If you are feeling unwell or notice a change in your condition, tell the nurses or doctors as soon as possible.
4. Please ask your visitors to wash their hands thoroughly before leaving the room.

Your doctors may decide that you need antibiotics. These are usually given in a drip, but can also be given in tablet form. If this is the case it is important that you take them as instructed.

The nurses will take swabs from you at regular intervals. The swabs are usually taken from your nose, throat, groin, and any previously positive sites but other sites may also be included. This is to see if we can still detect MRSA.

MRSA will not stop you from being discharged when you are ready to go home.