

# Patient information

## MRSA – what is it?

MRSA stands for **M**eticillin **R**esistant **S**taphylococcus **A**ureus. *Staphylococcus aureus* is the name of a bacteria which is commonly found on the skin and in the noses of healthy people. This is called **colonisation** or **carriage**. Meticillin is a test antibiotic which is used in laboratories to check for resistance to antibiotics. So, MRSA is a strain of *Staph. Aureus* that has developed a resistance to some antibiotics.

Carriage of MRSA does not mean that you have an infection, nor will it cause you any harm. In fact, you would not be aware of its presence, unless you had been screened for it. Occasionally bacteria carried on the skin can enter the body and cause infections. These might be quite minor such as pimples or boils whilst others may be more serious for example, wound or blood stream infections. Infections caused by MRSA require treatment with specific antibiotics.

### Why is MRSA screening important?

It is important to screen for MRSA because, if we detect it on your skin or in your nose, we can give you treatment to try and eradicate it, thereby reducing your risk of developing an infection. In addition, as it is a bacteria that is found on the skin, it is very easily carried on the hands of health care workers which means that there is a risk that they can pass it on from one patient to another.

### How is MRSA screening carried out?

We screen for MRSA by taking two swabs .One from your nostrils and one from your groins. If you have any wounds we will also take a swab from the wound when the next dressing change takes place. If you are admitted to hospital in an emergency, MRSA screening will usually be carried out by the nursing staff in the Emergency department, or the admissions ward.

### How will I know if I have MRSA colonisation?

If your MRSA screen is positive a member of the nursing staff or your doctor (surgeon) will inform you.

## **What is the treatment for MRSA?**

The treatment for MRSA colonisation is a five day course of antiseptic nasal cream, body wash/shampoo and dusting powder. Following the treatment we will re-screen you on a number of occasions to check if the MRSA is still there. If we detect it again after your treatment, we will give you a second course of treatment. Sometimes it is difficult to get rid of MRSA if you have a skin ulcer, a wound which has difficulty healing or a skin condition.

## **Will my discharge from hospital be delayed if I have MRSA?**

**No.** There is no reason why your discharge from hospital should be delayed as long as your doctor is satisfied that you are well enough to leave hospital. If you have started treatment for MRSA you may take it with you, when you are discharged, and complete the course at home.

## **Will I need to be screened for MRSA after I have been discharged?**

**No.** It is not usually necessary to screen for MRSA after you have been discharged, but if you have any concerns then please contact your G.P. for advice.

## **Are my family and friends at risk if I have MRSA?**

**No.** MRSA is not a risk for healthy people. We would ask however, that all visitors to the hospital clean their hands on entering the ward and just before they leave.

## **Will I need to be isolated in a single room if I have MRSA?**

Not necessarily. We can prevent the spread of MRSA in the hospital by making sure that all healthcare workers carry out hand hygiene between caring for different patients, and wear disposable gloves and aprons for direct patient care. If you have a skin condition or MRSA is found in an ulcer or wound, the risk of spread from one patient to another is increased so we may wish to isolate you in a single room. We will also isolate you if you are admitted to a surgical or orthopaedic ward. The nursing staff looking after you will explain if isolation in a single room is recommended.

## **Further Information**

If you have any concerns or questions about MRSA, please ask a member of the nursing staff, or the doctors looking after you. You may also speak to a member of the Infection Prevention Team if you require further information.

Please see the following web site for further information: <http://www.nhs.uk>

*If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the disabledgo website link below:*

*<http://www.disabledgo.com/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust/main>*

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