

Where can I go for advice and information?

Understanding MRSA can be complicated and a worry to us all. This booklet might not cover all the questions you may have. If this is the case you can get further advice and information by:

Asking the ward manager, a Matron or a member of your healthcare team.

Asking to speak to one of the Infection Control Team.

Visiting or contacting the Patient Advice and Liaison Service based on B Floor near to main reception (telephone no 5699855)

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk

www.sunderland.nhs.uk/chs

This information was correct at the time of printing. While the Trust makes every reasonable effort to keep its information leaflets up to date, very recent changes may not yet be reflected in the guidance and you should discuss this with the clinical staff at the time of your appointment.

Date of publication: Jun 2005

Reviewed: Feb 2008

Review: Jan 2011

CGSG: 128/08

Ref: © City Hospitals Sunderland

MRSA WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT METHICILLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET



Infection Control Department

City Hospitals Sunderland

**Protecting patients from infection is everyone's responsibility
This information booklet provides information for patients their
carers and visitors about MRSA and answers some of the
frequently asked questions about MRSA whilst you are in
hospital.**

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- Let staff know if you are worried about something so they can help reassure you and act upon any issue you may have in order to improve standards of care.

Inform staff prior to admission if MRSA has been found in the past on any specimens that have been taken by your GP or any hospital where you have been treated.

DON'T

- Touch, pick or scratch your device e.g. drip site or operation site. Resist the temptation to show it off to your family and friends. If they have a cold or sore throat this could cause you a problem. It is also wise to ask them not to visit you in hospital if they are suffering from signs of infection.
- Clutter your bed table/locker top. This helps staff to keep these areas clean.
- Bag your rubbish. Bags are available from ward staff that you can attach to your locker or bed table for this purpose.
- Walk about the hospital in your bare-feet. If you do not have anything to cover your feet please inform a member of staff who will be able to help you.
- Encourage family and friends who have a cold or sore throat to visit you in hospital as this could cause you a problem. It is wise to ask them not to visit if they are suffering from signs of infection.

If you are re- admitted to hospital

If you should need to be re-admitted to hospital you will be screened for carriage of MRSA.

Isolation or barrier nursing may be advised until results of the screen are known.

- Bring a change of nightwear to hospital with you. However, if this presents a problem, please inform ward staff, as a limited supply is available on most wards. Accidents can happen so if your nightwear becomes damp or soiled please change into a clean set of clothing as soon as possible or let a member of staff know as germs thrive in warm or moist areas.
- Ask relatives to remove soiled clothing that needs laundering promptly. A member of staff will be able to provide an appropriate plastic bag for this purpose if you do not have one.
- Co-ordinate your visitors so that there are only 2 people at the bedside at any time (the more visitors a patient has the higher the chance of an infection being brought into hospital. This also makes it easier for nurses to prevent people from sitting on your bed as germs from visitors clothing may transfer onto your bedding.
- Ask your visitors to bathe and wear clean clothes before coming into visit.
- Comply with staff when you need to receive isolation nursing in a single room or barrier nursing in the main ward. This is sometimes necessary if, due to your medical condition, you are particularly prone to infections or have a particular condition or infection that may pose a risk to others
- Tell us when you are unhappy with the cleanliness of the ward or if you see something spilled onto the floor. Please report this by informing the nurse in charge of the ward.
- Keep staff who are caring for you informed of any infection you have before your date of surgery e.g. common cold, sore throat, infected corns, skin lesions, boils or of any recent dental treatment.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin (M) Resistant (R) Staphylococcus (S) Aureus (A)

Staphylococcus aureus lives completely harmlessly on the skin and in the nose of about one in three healthy people (30%). Due to the over use of antibiotics over many years, some strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* have developed a degree of resistance to the more commonly used antibiotics. (e.g. penicillin). It is this resistance, which makes MRSA worrying, as it may not be as easy to treat if it does cause an infection.

The media refer to MRSA as a “super bug” with no cure. This has caused alarm and anxiety about going into hospital. This is not true MRSA is not a super bug; there are antibiotics which can be used to treat people who have a MRSA infection.

MRSA can live on our body quite harmlessly. However it has the potential to cause infection problems if it is allowed to enter the body e.g. when the surface of the skin is broken. This may be due to trauma, surgical wounds, intravenous drips or other medical devices.

Why do some people get MRSA?

The most common way MRSA is passed on is via the hands, which is why it is important for everyone to have good hand hygiene.

In many cases we do not know where or when a person acquires MRSA.

Some people have a higher risk of developing MRSA than others. This increase in risk may be due to:

- Age – premature/young babies and the elderly
- People who may have required several courses of antibiotics
- People who have been in hospital for a long time
- People who are very sick with chronic conditions
- People who have had an operation or have a wound
- People who have catheters (tubes) going into their bodies

How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

A specimen is taken, usually a swab and sent to the laboratory. The results can take a few days, as the germs (bacteria) need to grow to be identified.

What is the difference between MRSA colonisation and MRSA infection?

Medical and nursing staff may use these terms

Colonisation it is quite normal for germs to live on our body without causing any harm. At home you are likely to carry germs that are normally found in the household environment. When you come into hospital you may carry germs that can be found in the hospital environment. When germs live like this without causing any harm your body is said to be colonised with the germs. Sometimes these germs can be found in wounds or around drip sites.

MRSA colonisation means that MRSA germs are present on the skin or in the throat or nasal passageways without causing infection or harm. It is not usually necessary to receive treatment for colonisation, unless you require certain types of operations (e.g. hip replacement) or procedures such as renal dialysis.

If you do require treatment it will be in the form of antibiotic local (topical) treatments;

also be informed to ensure that any necessary treatment can be completed.

Once at home, normal hygiene is sufficient. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water. This is very important if you are caring for any wound you may have. Keep your wound covered, i.e. by clothing or a dressing, until healed and this will help to prevent the spread of MRSA. Ensure cuts and abrasions are covered with a dressing until healed. It is important to carry on as normal as possible.

Are family and friends at risk?

No. They can visit you, having social contact, holding hands, sitting beside or giving someone a hug or kiss does not pose a risk to fit, healthy people.

What can I do to help prevent the spread of infection?

DO

- Take care when cleaning your hands. Dirty hands can cause infection. To reduce the number of germs on your hands you need to clean them often, even though they may appear to be clean e.g. after visiting the toilet or using a bedpan, before eating and **always** before and after coming into contact with your wound or device site (e.g. drip site).
- Ask your visitors to clean their hands when visiting and when leaving your bed area by using the alcohol hand rub provided. Notices are available at the entrances to wards and above sinks to help remind and show them how to do this.
- Remind staff to clean their hands before they care for you.
- Try and take a shower/bath and wash your hair prior to admission. By doing this you will reduce the risk of carrying germs on your skin that might cause you or another patient an infection. Keep your own personal toiletries clean and dry, making sure you do not leave them on washbasins for others to use.

- If you have a tumble dryer and the fabric is suitable –dry on the hottest cycle appropriate. Otherwise thoroughly air dry prior to ironing.

Once dry, iron on the hottest setting suitable for the fabric.

Training and education for all staff

All staff receives regular mandatory training to keep them up to date with the latest guidance for protecting patients and to remind them how to prevent infection. Nursing and medical staff are also trained and assessed in aseptic technique to maintain strict infection control standards when carrying out procedures such as inserting drips and dressing changes.

Infection Control Team

City Hospitals Sunderland has an Infection Control Team with doctors, microbiologists and nurses and laboratory staff who help to manage infection control and support patients and staff. From giving expert advice on prescribing antibiotics to individual patient risk assessment and providing infection surveillance.

Can children get MRSA?

Yes, but MRSA is not a risk to fit, healthy children. Babies less than six weeks old could be vulnerable, and direct contact with a MRSA positive person should be avoided.

Will I need treatment when I am discharged from hospital?

All prescribed courses of treatment you are given should be completed. Nursing staff will provide any necessary information and instructions before you are discharged. If you are receiving care from the district nursing services, they will

- Nasal ointment applied to the inside of the nostrils three times a day.
- An antiseptic mouth wash gargle or throat spray to be used three times a day.
- An antiseptic body wash (usually Hibiscrub) to be used during a shower or bath and to be used to shampoo the hair.

These treatments are used for five days. If you choose not to have this treatment you will need to discuss this further with your Consultant as it may affect your treatment plan.

It is important that if you have a history of dermatitis or other skin condition to let nursing staff know, as they will advise further on the use of an alternative skin wash. If any treatment causes skin irritation STOP using it immediately and inform your named nurse.

Infection is said to occur when germs invade areas where they should not be and the body shows signs and symptoms e.g. a raised temperature, wound redness, pain or wound discharge.

MRSA infection means that the MRSA germs are present in greater numbers and have caused an infection. MRSA can cause abscesses, boils and can infect wounds – Including deliberate wounds such as those made during surgery and also through which tubes enter the body for example a drip (intra-venous line). These are called localised infections.

MRSA may then spread into the body and cause serious infections in the blood stream (bacteraemia). If MRSA is causing you an infection you will be prescribed antibiotics.

How can I prevent the spread of MRSA?

- Always wash your hands before handling food.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet.
- Do not remove or interfere with any dressings applied by nursing staff.

- Always cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing.
- Remember to wash your hands after blowing or touching your nose.
- Do not touch, pick or scratch your devices e.g. drip site, catheter bags, wound drains.

Care in hospital

What precautions are taken in this hospital to prevent people getting MRSA?

Hospital screening for MRSA

In hospital, screening for MRSA is often carried out on patients. This will occur when patients are admitted to a critical care unit, orthopaedic or ward and some surgical wards. We may also screen patients for MRSA when:

- They have been transferred from another hospital
- Are admitted from residential and nursing homes
- They have recently been in hospital abroad
- They are known to have had MRSA

Hospital guidelines for MRSA

City Hospitals Sunderland has implemented specific guidelines based on national recommendations for the prevention and control of MRSA which include:

- Every patient has an infection control risk assessment.
- All health care workers wash their hands before and after patient contact.
- Alcohol hand rub is located at the point of care including patients bedside.

Basic steps to follow

- Nursing staff will have placed the soiled or contaminated laundry into a grey plastic property bag for you or your visitor to take home.
- Before dealing with the laundry, cover any cuts or skin abrasions on your hands with a waterproof plaster.
- Empty the soiled or contaminated laundry directly from the bag into the washing machine. Try to prevent directly handling the soiled or contaminated linen. Ideally you should wear protective rubber gloves e.g. household type gloves, and use them only for the purpose of carrying out this task.
- Once you have removed the laundry from this bag, the bag should be disposed of into your household waste.
- If the outside of your washing machine becomes soiled, wipe it clean as soon as possible using paper tissue and a general purpose cleaning product.
- Wash the laundry on a separate cycle. DO NOT add other items to the load.
- Wash clothing on the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric. A biological powder/liquid is preferable.
- Wash your gloved hands with soap and water, rinse and remove the gloves.
- WASH YOUR HANDS AGAIN with soap and water, rinse and dry them thoroughly before carrying out any other tasks e.g. eating and drinking.

You will be asked to keep your single room door closed at all times. If this begins to cause a problem then your named nurse will be happy to discuss this with you.

What about my visitors?

Visitors will be asked by staff to clean their hands with liquid soap and water (followed by thorough drying) when entering and when leaving the ward or your room and by using the alcohol gel provided before they contact you.

In general it is not advisable for children and visitors who are sick themselves to visit, as they may be at risk of picking up an infection more easily.

How long will I need to receive isolation or barrier nursing?

This will depend on the nature of the infection/the type of resistant germs you are carrying. It might be anything from a few days to longer as it will also depend on how you respond to your treatment.

How should my washing and personal clothing be handled?

When dealing with used laundry e.g. night wear, underwear or other clothing, the risk of infection to healthy people is minimal.

However, it is sensible to take some good **basic** hygiene precautions when handling laundry that is soiled or laundry from a patient with a known or potential MRSA infection.

Please note that there is a supply of nightwear/underwear available for use, provided by City Hospitals Sunderland. If your relative or the person you are caring for would like to use this facility, please discuss this with the named nurse or ward manager.

- Plastic gloves and aprons will be worn for some nursing tasks
- Ensuring that equipment is cleaned after use.
- Specific cleaning procedures for rooms, furniture and equipment
- Isolation and barrier nursing precautions
- Careful handling of used linen and laundry
- Careful handling of clinical waste
- High standards of aseptic technique (e.g. dressing changes)
- Good antibiotic prescribing practice
- MRSA surveillance systems

These MRSA policies are available on City Hospital's Sunderland intranet site, further explanation is also given in this booklet.

Hand Hygiene

The trust is participating in the national "Clean your hands campaign" and part of this is to encourage patients to ask staff caring for them, if they have washed their hands, staff wear yellow badges stating:

"Its OK to ask have I cleaned my hands"

It is import staff should be cleaning their hands before and after providing you with any care. If you do not see staff doing this do not be afraid to remind them.

All visitors should wash their hands before and after visiting a patient with MRSA.

Protective Clothing – Gloves, aprons and masks

Staff will need to wear protective clothing, aprons and gloves when caring for you in order to reduce the risk of passing your infection/germs to other patients. Occasionally staff may need to wear a fluid shield mask to protect them.

Visitors rarely need to wear protective clothing. If you are visiting someone with MRSA and are helping with their care you should wear aprons and gloves. If visitors have cuts and abrasions they should be covered with a dressing before visiting the patient. Visitors can be advised by nursing staff which clothing to wear.

Hands must be washed before putting on **and** removing this protective clothing.

Clean Environment and Equipment

City Hospitals Sunderland has dedicated cleaning staff to clean all areas of the hospital and equipment. This is monitored regularly by our domestic staff and Matrons. Our hospital also regularly undergoes Patient Environment Action Team (PEAT) inspections that measure hospitals by looking at cleanliness levels. You can check on how City Hospitals Sunderland is doing by logging on to <http://patientexperience.nhsestates.gov.uk> (click on to clean hospitals)

Isolation of patients (caring for you in a single room)

It is not uncommon for isolation or barrier nursing to be used in hospital. This means that you will be nursed in a single room (isolation nursing) or, if a side room is not available then you will be nursed in a ward bay until a single room becomes available (barrier nursing). The Infection Control Team will assist the staff on your ward in assessing where you will be nursed.

Why we need to provide isolation and barrier nursing

- To protect other patients and staff from catching an infection you may have.
- To protect you from infection if you have a weak immune system and therefore are more susceptible to infection.
- Whether you are nursed in a single room or the main ward, staff will care for you in the same way.

Will isolation or barrier nursing stop me from getting the right treatment?

NO!

If you need to visit another department as part of your treatment then staff in those departments will be made aware of your condition and will take the relevant precautions to allow your treatment to go ahead safely.

If possible, visits to other departments will be planned to take place so you come into contact with the least number of vulnerable patients.

Can I leave my bed area?

Generally you will be asked to stay in your single room or next to your bed during the time you are carrying resistant germs or thought to be infectious to other patients. However, depending on the way in which your infection or germs are spread you may be allowed to leave the side room or your bed area.