

MRSA

Infection Control Team Patient Information Leaflet

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for meticillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus and is part of the staphylococcus aureus family of bacteria (germs).

Staphylococcus aureus is a type of bacteria that lives harmlessly on the skin and in the nose of approximately one third of people. If you have a skin condition or a break in your skin, it can cause an infection which can be treated with antibiotics.

MRSA is a type of staphylococcus aureus that has developed resistance to many commonly-used antibiotics, such as penicillin. This makes the bacteria more difficult to treat. It can live harmlessly on the skin and nose, and people who have MRSA on their body or in their noses but are unharmed by it, are described as being colonised.

In some cases, MRSA bacteria can enter the bloodstream and cause infection in the blood which will need to be treated in hospital.

Where is MRSA found and how can I catch it?

MRSA bacteria can be found in many environments including hospitals, care homes, clinics and in the community generally.

People can carry the bacteria and transfer it onto equipment and other items, if basic hygiene (such as hand washing) is not followed.

MRSA bacteria can be passed from person to person, most commonly on peoples' hands. As people can carry these bacteria without knowing it, they may be 'colonised' with MRSA bacteria before admission to hospital or they may acquire them while in hospital. People who have an MRSA infection do not look any different to anyone else.

Are MRSA infections dangerous?

MRSA infections are more common in the elderly and people with long term health problems. They are not as common in healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies.

MRSA bacteria can cause problems when they get into the body through a break in the skin or via a medical device such as a drip or a catheter. MRSA infection can potentially spread into the blood causing bacteraemia (blood poisoning); however, this is very rare.

In rare cases, MRSA infection can be fatal. The most vulnerable patients are those who are already very ill and who have a reduced immune system which may make them more prone to catching an infection.

How do I help stop the spread of infection?

Some of the things you can do to protect yourself and others are:

- Wash your hands after visiting the toilet and before you eat
- Do not touch your wounds, drips or catheters
- Do not remove wound dressings
- Report any dirty areas or spillages to the nurse in charge
- Do not share items such as towels and clothes with other people
- Remind all staff caring for you to wash their hands or use the alcohol hand gel

- Relatives and friends should not visit if they are unwell
- Visitors must not sit on the beds or use the patient toilets

How will I know if I have MRSA bacteria?

The doctors and nurses caring for you may take swabs and samples from your nose, groin and other areas of your body. This is known as screening for MRSA. These samples are sent to the hospital laboratory for testing.

If the samples identify the presence of MRSA bacteria, your doctor will be informed and will use these results to decide what treatment to give you. You should speak to your doctor and nurses for further information.

You may wish to speak to a member of the Infection Control Team and they can be contacted at the hospital on 01384 244174 (8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday). The Office of Public Health Infection Prevention and Control Team at Dudley CCG can be contacted on 01384 816232 (9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

How will it be treated?

If you have MRSA bacteria on your skin, hair or nose, you will be given an antiseptic wash for your body and hair and an antibiotic ointment for your nose. If you have infected wounds, or infection elsewhere in your body, your doctor may prescribe antibiotics to treat you. There are some antibiotics available that can treat infections caused by MRSA.

What else will happen if I have MRSA bacteria?

While in hospital, you may be moved into a single room or into another bay to prevent the spread of infection to other vulnerable patients. This decision will be taken in conjunction with the doctors, nurses and Infection Control Team. If you are moved into a single room, the staff will provide you with an information leaflet about this.

The nursing staff will advise you to wear hospital nightwear during your stay in hospital. However, if you decide to wear your own nightclothes, arrangements can be made to have these cleaned. You should speak to the nurse in charge about this.

Will I have to stay in hospital longer?

Patients who are colonised with MRSA bacteria are not ill and will not have to stay in hospital any longer than necessary. If you have an MRSA infection, you may have to stay in hospital until your doctor is sure that the infection is clearing up.

What will happen when I go home?

You, your family, carers and friends may be worried about you going home.

If your hospital doctor feels you need more care related to the MRSA, they may refer you to The Office of Public Health Infection Prevention and Control Team at Dudley CCG. Not every patient will be referred to this service. Your ward nurse will discuss this with you and make the necessary arrangements.

The precautions taken whilst you were in hospital were aimed at preventing the spread of infection to other ill and vulnerable patients. Any staff involved in caring for you when you go home may still wear gloves and aprons. This is because they may then go and care for other sick people. Your family and visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons, unless they care for other sick people.

It is important that you maintain good personal hygiene. Washing your hands is the most important thing you can do. Clothes and bed linen should be washed at the highest temperature the fabric can withstand and tumble dried, if possible. Manufacturer's instructions should be followed.

When you get home, you do not need to restrict your usual activities – family and work life can continue as normal. There is no need to stop having visitors, unless they are unwell themselves. Your children and visiting children are not at risk from MRSA unless they have a medical condition, have had a recent operation or are ill.

If you have to come back to hospital, or see any doctors or nurses for treatment, please tell them that you have recently had an MRSA infection.

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

Your GP, nurse or The Office of Public Health Infection Prevention and Control Team at Dudley CCG on 01384 816232 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dudleygroup.nhs.uk/about-us/quality/infection-control/patient-information-leaflets/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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