



MRSA

What to do at home

Being discharged from hospital is an important step on the road to recovery. You and your family may be worried about being at home in view of the strict measures that may have been practiced while you was in hospital.

These measures were aimed at controlling and reducing the spread of all germs, not just MRSA, to other vulnerable patients at risk because of their illness or surgery.

At home these risks are reduced but it is important that you continue to follow good personal hygiene rules (whether you have MRSA or not).

If you have to be re-admitted to hospital or another place of care, please tell your nurse if you had MRSA when you was last an inpatient.

Patient Experience Team

The team are available to help with any concerns/complaints you may have about your experience at the Trust. Their office is in the Main Foyer (Gate 4) of Doncaster Royal Infirmary. Contact can be made either in person, by telephone or email.

The contact details are:

Telephone: 01302 642764 or 0800 028 8059

Email: pals.dbh@dbh.nhs.uk

As a patient, it is important that you get better quickly and stay well. It is important that you know what MRSA and other healthcare associated infections are and what you can do to stop getting one, whilst in hospital.

MRSA stands for Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus which is resistant to commonly used antibiotics such as penicillins. MRSA is not a 'hospital superbug'.

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus is a bug that lives harmlessly on human skin, but can sometimes cause common infections, eg. boils and abscesses. It is found in the nose and skin of about 20 - 40% of healthy people, this is what we call colonisation or carriage.

It can cause an infection if it gets into broken skin during or after surgery or when you accidentally cut yourself. However, Staphylococcus aureus will be killed by most commonly used antibiotics.

MRSA can be more difficult to treat because there are fewer antibiotics that will kill it.

How can you get MRSA?

MRSA can be passed from person to person by contact between them. Someone carrying the germ on their hands or skin can pass it on to another person if good basic hygiene is lacking.

It can also be found in the environment or on equipment used by people carrying the germ if cleaning standards are not maintained.

People can 'carry' MRSA without knowing it, so you may have acquired it before admission.



How do you know I have MRSA?

Some patients as part of their admission to hospital will be screened routinely for MRSA e.g. before planned surgery or as a medical emergency. In hospital, routine specimens (including swabs) are taken to look for germs, and MRSA might be found as part of this procedure.

Swabs can take two days to process so we might not find out until you have been in hospital for some time or even after you have returned home. If MRSA is found, your medical team is told and will prescribe treatment, if necessary.

If you are discharged home from hospital before the results of the swabs are available, your general practitioner (GP) will be informed and advised of any precautions or treatment necessary. You will be told if further swabs are needed.

Is MRSA dangerous?

MRSA usually affects elderly people and those with certain long-term health problems. It generally does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. It is not generally necessary to treat MRSA colonisation.

It is important to remember that MRSA is not just in hospitals. People living in the community can also carry the germ. The number of cases in the UK have dropped dramatically over the last 10 years.

If you have an infection the microbiologist and your doctor will decide the most appropriate treatment. Rarely, MRSA can be fatal. In such cases, the person probably acquired MRSA when they were already very ill, their immune system was low, and their body was unable to cope with this additional problem.

What to do in hospital

When you are admitted to hospital, you are exchanging the familiar surrounding of your own home to share a ward with other people. You may be more vulnerable of infection because of your illness, treatment or surgery. By its very nature, a hospital exposes you to other people's germs.

You can help yourself and other patients by following this advice:

- always wash and dry your hands after visiting the toilet and before you eat
- don't touch or fiddle with your wound or any medical device, for example a drip or catheter
- keep the space around you tidy and uncluttered so that the cleaning staff can remove dust easily - your visitors or relatives could help you do this
- tell the nurse or matron if you spot any dirt or dust on the ward
- shower or bath as frequently as you are able
- remind staff about hand washing if they forget, don't worry they won't be offended. They may use alcohol hand rub nearby as this also cleans hands
- ask your visitors to wash using soap and water and dry their hands thoroughly or use the alcohol hand rub before and after entering your room or bed-space.
- ask your visitors not to sit on your bed or use patients' toilets
- don't share possessions or equipment with other patients unless it has been cleaned.

If you are worried or unsure about controlling infection, ask your nurse to explain or ask to speak to a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team.

What if I get MRSA?

If you are found to have MRSA, your treatment will continue as normal. You may be moved into a single room (if one is available or your condition requires this), but do not panic! This helps to treat you more effectively and protect other patients. Your nurse will explain to you and your relatives about what will happen and why there is a need to move you.

If you are colonised with MRSA you may be prescribed a special antiseptic body foam, which can also be used in your hair and an antibacterial cream for your nose, to remove the MRSA. The nurse will explain how to use these agents. However, if you have signs of infection, the microbiologist and your doctor will discuss the best medication for you.

As you get better, you may no longer 'carry' MRSA but some people remain colonised with MRSA. It is important to tell staff when you are admitted into hospital, or visit hospital for treatment, that you have previously had MRSA. Additional precautions or treatment can be given to aid your recovery and prevent infection.

