

What is MRSA?

Approximately one third of the adult population carry bacteria called *Staphylococcus aureus* either on their skin or in their nose. Often referred to as 'Staph' or 'Golden Staph'. They usually live on our skin without causing any problems. However they can get inside the body through broken skin and cause infection that requires treatment with antibiotics.

Some types of *Staphylococcus aureus* have become 'used' to the common antibiotics and are then described as Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

What is community-acquired MRSA?

MRSA was traditionally a 'hospital' problem. However in recent times MRSA has been identified in healthy people living in the community who have not been in hospital. This type is called non-multiresistant MRSA (nmMRSA).

What is colonisation?

Many bacteria can live on or in the body without causing disease or illness. This is called 'Colonisation'. People can be colonised for very long periods of time, sometimes years, which is why when patient's return to hospital, special infection control contact precautions are taken. Colonisation with MRSA or nmMRSA does not usually require treatment.

What is infection?

When bacteria cause disease or illness this is called infection. When the infection is caused by MRSA or nmMRSA, your doctor will consider commencing treatment; if appropriate.



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People caring for people.

MRSA (Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)



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Who is at risk from MRSA infections?

MRSA infections can affect anyone. Skin to skin contact and crowding can increase risk of infection so outbreaks tend to occur in schools, households, childcare centres, and jails. You are at increased risk if you have health problems such as diabetes, dermatitis, or a poor immune system. Infrequent washing, scratching insect bites, cuts or abrasions increase your risk of infection.

How can MRSA be spread?

MRSA is spread through contact with the bacteria. This may be from direct contact with a colonised or infected person or by indirect contact with a contaminated surface such as bed linen, shared towels or toilets. To prevent the spread of MRSA to other sick patients in the hospital the nursing staff will care for you using infection control contact precautions and strict hand hygiene.

How will my care change whilst in hospital?

- You will be managed using infection control contact precautions until you are discharged.
- A sign is placed outside your door to alert hospital staff for the need to use protective infection control contact precautions. This sign also alerts visitors of the need to speak with nursing staff prior to entering your room.
- The hospital staff will wear protective clothing such as gloves and an apron or gown when they enter your room. These items are disposed of in a separate waste bin as the staff member leaves your room.



Good hand hygiene practices

Hand Hygiene is the most effective way to prevent ALL infections, including the flu and the common cold. Encourage your family and friends to maintain good hand hygiene practices every day.

Hand Washing Alternative - Alcohol based hand rub / gel.

During your stay in hospital you may have seen the staff using an alcohol-based hand rub, as an alternative to soap and water. Alcohol-based hand rubs or gels can be used for hand hygiene as long as your hands are not visibly soiled / dirty.

Can i still have visitors?

Yes – you can still have visitors. In general, exposure to MRSA does not cause infection in healthy people; this includes pregnant women, babies and children. Contact such as hugging and kissing is OK. Visitors with medical conditions that put them at increased risk of infection should wear gloves and gown when visiting. Encourage your visitors to perform hand hygiene before and after they enter your room. They can use both soap and water at the wall sink in your room, or the alcohol hand rub provided inside your room.

In addition to this, visitors please:

- Don't sit or lie on the patient's bed
- Don't use the patient's bathroom
- Don't visit if you have flu-like symptoms, diarrhoea, vomiting, open wounds or lesions
- Don't visit any other patients in other parts of the hospital

What happens when i go home?

- When you return home it is important for you, your family and your friends to continue the good hand hygiene practices that you have been taught in hospital.
- There are no special precautions required for the washing of clothes, linen, crockery and cutlery or for the cleaning of the bath, toilet and shower.
- It is important that you always tell your doctor, nurse, paramedic, or other health care
- provider that you have previously had MRSA. This will help to prevent the future spread of MRSA.

Where can i get further information?

You can talk to your doctor or the nursing staff. If you wish to speak with the Infection Control Department ask your nurse to contact us.

References

1. NSW health: Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) in the community: Information for the public. July 2012
2. Queensland Health Resource No: FS144. Developed by the Infection Management and Prevention Service. Updated: November 2015