

**Q Are my family and friends at risk of catching the bacterium from me?**

**A** If basic hygiene measures, like hand washing, are followed, people with MRSA are not a risk to healthy members of your family or visitors, including babies, children and pregnant women.

**Q What happens when I am ready to leave hospital?**

**A** Having MRSA should not delay your discharge from hospital. If a District Nurse is visiting you s/he will be told that you may still have MRSA.

Once you get home there will be no need for any special precautions unless specified by the hospital staff. Good hygiene measures such as hand washing are all that is required.

**Q What if I have more questions?**

**A** Please ask the nurses who are looking after you.

**Q Do I need to tell anyone?**

**A** There are some instances when you need to tell the nurses and doctors caring for you that you have, or previously had, MRSA:

- On admission to hospital.
- Before admission to a nursing or residential home.
- Before an out patients appointment.
- Before visiting your GP or practice nurse for dressing changes.

If you need this information in large print or another format, please contact the Patient Advice & Liaison Service on 01793 604031

**Author:** Infection Control  
**Date produced:** January 2002  
**Date reviewed:** December 2003  
**Review date:** December 2004  
**Leaflet number:** PALS PiL - 0038

# MRSA

## Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus

## Information for Patients

The aim of this leaflet is to answer the questions most commonly asked by patients, their relatives and carers about how MRSA will affect them.

### **Q What is MRSA?**

**A** The initials MRSA stand for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. It is the bacterium (germ) called Staphylococcus Aureus, which has become resistant to (unaffected by) some of the more commonly used antibiotics, which include Flucloxacillin or Methicillin.

### **Q What is Staphylococcus Aureus (Staph aureus)?**

**A** Staphylococci are bacteria and are the commonest type of bacteria to cause infections in humans. About one third of the population is colonised with Staphylococcus Aureus.

Colonised means that the bacteria live harmlessly on the skin or in the nose of a person, without causing any infection. In some circumstances, given the opportunity, the bacteria can cause infections in wounds, skin, eyes and urine for example.

### **Q How is MRSA spread?**

**A** Staph aureus can be spread mainly by touch via the hands; therefore regular hand washing by carers is essential.

As MRSA lives on the skin, and dust includes dead skin cells, the dust in the environment may also contain MRSA. Regular cleaning of the environment and hospital equipment is advised.

If a person has MRSA in their nose or chest, the bacteria can be dispersed into the air and passed onto another person e.g. by sneezing or coughing.

### **Q Why is MRSA a problem?**

**A** MRSA acts in the same way as a Staph aureus, which is antibiotic-sensitive (killed by commonly used antibiotics) and can cause exactly the same types of infections. MRSA differs from a sensitive Staph aureus in its potential resistance to the commonest antibiotics. However, there are some antibiotics, which are still effective in treating infection. These antibiotics may need to be given initially via a drip whilst in hospital, but some are also available which can be taken at home.

### **Q How is MRSA found?**

**A** MRSA is found when specimens are taken (e.g. wound swabs, sputum and urine samples) and sent to the laboratory for testing.

### **Q What happens if I am found to have MRSA?**

**A** If the bacterium is found on your body, on the skin, nose or wound, it may be colonising your skin without causing any harm. In some cases it may be causing an infection (e.g. a wound that is not healing well or other vulnerable sites). Because the bacterium may spread to other ill patients by hand contact or through the air when your bed linen is changed, it may be necessary to care for you in a side room, or area used for patients with MRSA.

You may be given powder and creams to put on your skin and in your nose and lotion to wash with. You may also need antibiotics if you have an infection.

In addition to treatment, it is sometimes necessary to take regular swabs or samples from different areas of your body to see if the treatment has worked.