

MRSA

Information for patients and visitors

We hope this leaflet will help you to understand about the bacteria MRSA. If you need any further explanation after reading this leaflet, or have any more questions, please do not hesitate to speak to the nursing staff on the ward or request that they contact the Infection Prevention and Control Nurse.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is short for Meticillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* are common bacteria found on the skin of approximately 30% of people. MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* that has become resistant to commonly used antibiotics. MRSA does not always cause infection and can be washed from the skin. If it is found in the nose it can be treated with a prescribed ointment.

How does it affect people?

It does not normally affect healthy people, but it may delay the healing process, particularly in sick patients.

How do people catch MRSA?

MRSA lives on dead skin particles and dust, and can be found in the environment. It will do little or no harm unless it invades the body. The spread of MRSA is usually by human contact, mainly by touch (via the hands). This can be limited by thorough hand washing and general cleanliness.

Patients are screened on admission to hospital to see if they have MRSA; some patients coming into hospital for a planned operation or procedure are screened at pre-admission.

Can it be treated?

Yes, by using the prescribed ointments and washes. Occasionally, antibiotics may be prescribed when there is infection or risk of infection.

Can MRSA return after treatment?

A person is said to be clear of MRSA when three consecutive swabs are negative. However, MRSA can return. If you have had MRSA previously it is advisable to inform medical staff on admission to hospital.

Do patients with MRSA have to be isolated?

Patients with MRSA will sometimes be nursed in a single room and sometimes on an open ward. However, the same precautions will be taken to prevent the spread of MRSA. Your nurse will explain these precautions to you. A barrier nursing sign will be displayed to alert staff and visitors who visit the ward.

Can the spread of MRSA be minimised?

Healthy people are at very little risk of catching MRSA but **all** visitors should clean their hands thoroughly on arrival and when leaving the wards. Visitors will be asked to wear disposable gloves and aprons **only** if participating in the nursing care of patients with MRSA, or if they have close contact with more than one patient. Patients with MRSA can help limit the spread of MRSA by remaining in their rooms or by their bed area as much as possible.

Can visitors infect other people?

Not if they follow the advice given in this leaflet. Although MRSA is unlikely to harm children and pregnant people, it is sensible to restrict visits from those who may be vulnerable to infections, such as the elderly, newborn babies or those recovering from illness.

All visitors should wash their hands thoroughly on arrival and on leaving the bedside; this is particularly important if visiting patients with MRSA or visiting more than one patient. Visitors who are asked to wear disposable gloves and aprons should dispose of them in an orange clinical waste bag.

If I have MRSA, will it delay my discharge?

Not usually. MRSA does not generally cause concern outside the hospital environment. Sometimes the ointments and washes prescribed in hospital may be continued at home. You will be advised on discharge about any precautions to be taken.

If I have MRSA, what about washing clothes?

You can wear your own clothes, which should be changed and washed daily. Your family or visitors should take home your worn clothes and night attire. A machine wash is sufficient for the clothes of anyone with MRSA, whether in or out of hospital.

Further information and advice

Information regarding the care of people with MRSA in the community can be obtained from Public Health England, or the Kent Community Health NHS Trust.

Public Health England (Kent)

Level Two, Civic Centre
Tannery Lane
Ashford
TN23 1PL

Telephone:  0344 225 3861

Kent Community Health NHS FoundationTrust

Email: kcht.infectioncontrol@nhs.net

Telephone:  01233 667740

Other contact details:

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust - Infection Control Team

Maidstone Hospital ☎ 01622 224037
Tunbridge Wells Hospital ☎ 01892 635679

NHS 111 ☎ 111

For general enquiries on infectious disease and health protection issues.

MTW NHS Trust is committed to making its patient information accessible in a range of languages and formats. If you need this leaflet in another language or format please ask one of your clinical care team or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). We will do our best to arrange this.

Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust welcomes all forms of feedback from our service users. If the standard of service you have received from the Trust does not meet your expectations, we want to hear from you. Please speak with the ward manager or the nurse in charge in the first instance, or you can contact the **Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)** on:

Telephone: ☎ 01622 224960 or ☎ 01892 632953

Email: mtw-tr.palsoffice@nhs.net

or visit their office at either Maidstone or Tunbridge Wells Hospital between 9.00am and 5.00pm, Monday to Friday.

You can be confident that your care will not be affected by highlighting any areas of concern or making a complaint. The Trust will retain a record of your contact, which is held separately to any medical records. If you are acting on behalf of a patient, we may need to obtain the patient's consent in order to protect patient confidentiality. More information on PALS or making a complaint can be found on the Trust's website: www.mtw.nhs.uk or pick up a leaflet from main reception.

Issue date: November 2018
Database reference: RWF-OPLF-PCS12

Review date: November 2021
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