

How do I avoid catching MRSA in hospital?

General hygiene

- Do not share personal items with other patients.
- Avoid touching drips (intravenous devices), wounds or catheters.
- If the area around your bedside is dirty or if bathrooms are dirty, ask for them to be cleaned - do not attempt to do this yourself.
- Don't be afraid to ask staff if they have washed their hands before they touch you.
- Don't be afraid to ask staff to clean the equipment they are going to use.
- Ask your visitors to wash their hands before they come onto the ward and when they leave. Ask them not to sit on the bed.

Hand hygiene

- Always wash your hands with soap and water after using the lavatory/commode and before and after eating. Ask for help if you need assistance.
- Apply alcohol hand rub (hand sanitiser) or use handwipes regularly to keep your hands clean.

MRSA

Contact MRSA Action UK for more information, including what to do when you go to hospital.

They also support people who have been affected by MRSA.

Visit or email:
mrsaactionuk.net
info@mrsaactionuk.net



This leaflet was produced by:



What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ that is found on the skin and in the nostrils of about a third of healthy people. It can cause harm if it enters the body, for example through cuts and sores.

MRSA stands for meticillin (M) resistant (R) *Staphylococcus* (S) *aureus* (A). MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* that has developed resistance to penicillin-based antibiotics. Strains of MRSA were first found in the 1960s following the widespread use of antibiotics and occur in many countries.

Who has MRSA?

MRSA is found on many healthy people. It usually lives in the moist areas such as armpits, groin, and nose. Some people carry MRSA for just a few hours or days, but other people carry MRSA for weeks or months. They don't know that they carry MRSA because it is not harming them and they have no symptoms. This is called 'colonisation'.

Why is MRSA a problem?

MRSA can cause problems in hospitals. Complicated medical treatments, including operations and drips, provide opportunities for germs like MRSA to enter the body where it can cause infections in wounds, bones, lungs and blood (bloodstream infections). MRSA can also get into damaged skin and cause local infections such as abscesses and boils.

Since MRSA is resistant to common antibiotics (such as meticillin), it means that other antibiotics have to be used to treat infections that it causes.

MRSA can be picked up on a person's hands and transferred to people and objects that are touched. MRSA can be spread easily between patients in this way.

How do you know if someone has MRSA?

People who carry MRSA do not look or feel different from anyone else. The MRSA does not harm them, and they have no symptoms unless they develop an infection.

When patients come into hospital, a nurse may take swabs that are sent to the laboratory to check for MRSA. This is called 'screening'. These results will help healthcare staff decide the safest way to proceed with your treatment.

MRSA screening

You may or may not be screened depending on where you are in a hospital and whether hospital staff think that you may be at risk of getting an MRSA infection.

During screening, a staff member takes a swab from some sites on your body. This usually happens when you first come into hospital or when you are assessed for a scheduled operation. In some instances, you may be screened more than once.

