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# Information for patients A Guide to MRSA



## Infection Prevention and Control



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## What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a very common bacteria (germ) which many people carry on their skin without any problems. Some strains are resistant to particular antibiotics and these strains are referred to as Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA). Both MRSA and Staphylococcus aureus can sometimes be carried by patients in hospital. It can be found on many parts of the body but is usually found in the nose and groin.

## How does MRSA spread?

Staphylococcus aureus can be spread from close contact with infected people, or touching contaminated surfaces or objects. If a person gets MRSA on their hands, they can pass it to people and objects that they touch, who can then in turn pass it on to others.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

Most people with MRSA bacteria on their skin do not have any symptoms. If MRSA causes an infection, symptoms may include boils, abscesses or wound infections.

## How will you know if I have MRSA?

Most carriers of MRSA do not develop an infection, and so do not have any symptoms and do not become ill. The only way of telling if someone has MRSA is to do special laboratory tests. All patients admitted to Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt (RJAH) have swabs taken from their nose, groin, wound, and sometimes, urine sent for MRSA screening.

## Notes:

Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility. Healthcare workers, patients and visitors all have a vital role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.

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

If possible, a single side room is found for you during your hospital stay. Your doctor may prescribe you antimicrobial body wash, and ointment for your nose. You can apply this yourself after instruction by a nurse, pharmacist, or doctor. Patients who are isolated because of MRSA will be seen by an Infection Prevention nurse to discuss MRSA.

### Can I have visitors whilst in hospital? Will MRSA harm family and friends?

Yes, you can still have visitors. All visitors should wash their hands thoroughly before and after visiting every patient. Alcohol hand rubs or gels are available at RJAH with dispensers usually located near patients' beds and in other clinical areas.

### What can I do to reduce the risk of spreading MRSA?

Normal social contact does not pose a significant risk to other healthy people, including pregnant women, children, and babies. The best way to prevent the spread of any infection is through thorough handwashing.

## When should I wash my hands?

**You should make regular and thorough hand washing as part of your daily routine, especially:**

- Before eating or handling food
- After using the toilet /commode
- After touching your wound, catheter,
- After blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing
- After touching animals or animal waste
- After handling soiled clothing / rubbish
- After changing a nappy
- Before and after touching a sick or injured person
- Before, during and after a visit to a hospital ward or residential or nursing home
- After removing any sort of glove

**Do not forget to encourage children to wash their hands at these times too.**

It is ok to remind healthcare staff to wash their hands. It may feel like an awkward question to ask when someone is looking after you, but you are entitled to ask if you are concerned.

## What happens after I go home?

If you require further treatment this will be instructed on your discharge summary. MRSA should not affect your normal daily activities or social contacts. If you have an open wound this should be covered when there are other people around or whilst outside your home. It is important that you wash your hands carefully before and after touching your wound.

## How to manage or wash your soiled clothing?

We do not wash patients' personal clothing in hospital. If your own clothing becomes soiled, your clothes will be sealed in a special pink dissolvable bag. This pink bag will then be placed into a white plastic 'patient's property' bag and stored in your locker, ready to be washed at home.

## How to wash soiled clothing using a washing machine:

1. Take the pink bag out of the white 'patient's property' bag.
2. Place the pink bag into the washing machine. Do not open the pink bag as it has been specially designed to go straight into the washing machine. Do not add any other items of clothing into the washing machine.
3. You should always wash your hands thoroughly after handling soiled clothing, or the bag of soiled clothing.
4. Use a biological powder, liquid, or tablets if possible.
5. Use a pre-wash cycle before the main wash cycle.
6. Wash the items at the very least 60°C so that the pink bag dissolves and releases the clothing into the washing machine (washing at a lower temperature may not dissolve the bag, which may result in the parts of the bag sticking to the clothing).
7. When the washing cycle is complete, remove the washing from the washing machine and dry the clothing naturally or in a tumble dryer.