

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

DRAFT

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MRSA stands for methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is a common bacterium that can live, quite harmlessly in the nose, throat and sometimes on the skin of healthy people. This is referred to as colonisation or carriage. However, Staphylococcus aureus may cause harm (infection) when it has the opportunity to enter the body. This is more likely to happen in people who are already unwell.

Staphylococcus aureus can cause abscesses and boils. It can infect wounds (such as leg ulcers or wounds caused by surgery). Occasionally it can cause urine or chest infections. Less commonly it can enter the blood stream and cause septicaemia (blood poisoning). Staphylococcus aureus infections are treated with a variety of different antibiotics depending on the type and severity of the infection. Some types of Staphylococcus aureus are resistant to some of the most commonly used antibiotics and is known as MRSA.

In healthy people this bacterium is not harmful but it can be a problem in hospitals where people are recovering from operations and illnesses, and are much more vulnerable to infections.

Patients who have MRSA colonisation or carriage do not look or feel different from other patients. Taking swabs from body sites such as the nose and perineum can detect MRSA. If infection is suspected, a swab or sample can be sent to the laboratory to check for all types of bacterial infection (including MRSA).

If you have community staff involved in your care, they may wear gloves and an apron for procedures that require significant contact, such as assisting you with washing or changing a wound dressing.

Yes. We advise that normal social contact does not pose a significant risk to other healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. Your visitors will not usually have to wear gloves or aprons. If any of your visitors wish to be involved in your personal care, or if there is a particular concern about risk to a particular person, please discuss with nursing staff if you are in hospital. It is recommended that visitors do not sit on hospital beds and that they clean their hands after visiting.

Having MRSA colonisation should not affect your normal daily activities, social life or prevent you going to work. MRSA should not affect your sex life.

If you have an open wound, it should be kept covered with a clean dressing. It is important to wash your hands well before and after touching your wound.

Occasionally MRSA can be detected after treatment has been stopped. If you come into hospital again, it may be necessary to take additional swabs to check this. When at home, your GP will be able to advise if any additional treatment or swabs are required.

