



MRSA Factsheet

Information for service users in the community

What is MRSA?

- MRSA stands for Meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.
- MRSA is a type of bacteria (germ) which has been around for many years, it was first identified in the 1960s.
- Less than 1% of people have MRSA.
- The bacteria can be found in a person's nose or on their skin. We all have lots of bacteria on our skin that normally doesn't cause a problem.
- When a person goes into hospital carrying MRSA and has a procedure that involves breaking the skin the MRSA can get into the body and may cause an infection.
- Infections are usually treated with antibiotics. As MRSA has become resistant to a group of antibiotics called Meticillin, the infection is treated with a different antibiotics.
- It is important to remember that MRSA is not normally a health concern for those people who are fit and well.

What problems can MRSA cause?

- People who have the MRSA bacteria on their skin are said to be colonised, but not infected. The MRSA bacteria are simply 'hitching a ride' on the surface of the body and have not got inside the body tissues or bloodstream.
- When the MRSA bacteria are simply being carried on the surface of the skin, they are not harmful to a healthy person. Because of this, most people are never aware that they are carrying the bacteria.
- MRSA bacteria can become harmful and cause an infection if it gets into the body, usually through a surgical wound or chronic wound, e.g. leg ulcer, or indwelling device, such as a urinary catheter.

How is it spread?

- MRSA is mainly spread through touch. The bacteria can get onto your hands if you touch a person who has MRSA or by touching contaminated equipment or surfaces.

MRSA treatment?

- When MRSA is causing an infection, appropriate antibiotics will be prescribed.
- People carrying the MRSA bacteria on their skin do not usually need treatment.

How can MRSA be prevented?

- Strict attention should be paid to handwashing. Everyone who has contact with a person with MRSA should wash their hands thoroughly using liquid soap and warm running water or use an alcohol handrub.
- Do not hesitate to remind healthcare staff and visitors to wash their hands or use an alcohol handrub.
- If you have a wound or break in your skin, it is important to wash your hands thoroughly before and after applying a wound dressing.
- Linen and clothing should be washed on the hottest wash cycle that the fabric will withstand.
- MRSA can be killed by detergent and household disinfectants.

Can MRSA be passed on to relatives and friends?

- MRSA is not usually a health concern for those people who are fit and well, including pregnant women, children and babies.
- Family and friends should not be restricted from visiting.
- Visitors should clean their hands thoroughly on arrival and when leaving.

Can social events be attended?

- Yes, it is important that a person with MRSA does not restrict their social life. It is **not** a risk to healthy people.

What happens if a person with MRSA is admitted to hospital?

- A person admitted to hospital with MRSA may be allocated a single room.
- Screening swabs will be taken to check if MRSA is present and, if so, suppression treatment may be given. This is a five-day treatment of an antibacterial washing lotion and an ointment to be applied inside the nose. The aim of this treatment is to reduce the number of MRSA bacteria on the skin, reducing the possibility of developing an MRSA infection.

Where can I get further information?

Further information can be obtained from your GP, local Community Infection Prevention and Control or UK Health Security Agency Team.