



Patient Education Sheet

What is MRSA?

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MRSA stands for a type of germ called **Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus** (METH-ill-i-sill-in ree-SIS-tant staff-ill-oh-KOK-us AW-ree-us).

Staphylococcus aureus, or “Staph” is a very common germ that about 1 in 3 people have on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not usually cause problems for those who have it on the skin. However, sometimes it can cause serious wound infections, pneumonia, or infections of the blood. Medications called antibiotics are given to kill Staph germs when they cause infections.

MRSA infections are resistant to some antibiotics. This means that this form of Staph cannot be killed by the antibiotics that are often used to treat regular Staph infections.

Can infections caused by MRSA be treated?

MRSA infections can be treated. There are antibiotics that will kill this form of Staph. Some patients who have MRSA may need surgery to drain the infection. Your physician will decide what treatments are best for you.

How is MRSA spread?

People who have MRSA on their skin or who are infected with MRSA may be able to spread the germ to others. This germ can be passed on bed linens, bed rails, table tops, medical equipment, and other surfaces. It can then be spread to other people who touch these surfaces and equipment.

Who is most likely to get an MRSA infection?

Patients in the hospital who are more likely to get an MRSA infection include:

- Those who have other health conditions making them sick
- Those who have been in the hospital or a nursing home
- Those who have been in a group home
- Those who have been treated with antibiotics

People out in the community who are healthy may also get MRSA infections, which usually occur on the skin.

What is the hospital doing to prevent MRSA infections?

To prevent MRSA infections, your physicians, nurses, and other healthcare providers:

- ✓ **Clean their hands** with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand sanitizer before and after caring for every patient
- ✓ **Thoroughly clean** hospital rooms and medical equipment
- ✓ **Use Contact Precautions** when caring for patients with MRSA. Contact Precautions mean:
 - Patients with MRSA will be put in private rooms or will share a room with another patient who also has MRSA
 - The healthcare providers will put on gowns over clothing and gloves before entering patient rooms

- Visitors will be asked to put on gowns and gloves.
- When leaving the room, the gowns and gloves are removed and discarded, and hands are cleaned.
- Patients on Contact Precautions are asked to stay in their hospital rooms as much as possible and not to go to common areas, such as the lounge or kitchen areas. (They may go to treatment and test areas of the hospital as necessary.)
- Patients may be tested on admission to see if they have MRSA on their skin. This test involves swabbing the patient's nostrils.

For those patients who have previously tested positive for MRSA, a process is followed in order to be deemed negative after antibiotic treatment. This process includes a series of cultures of multiple body sites, in addition to consultation with an Infectious Disease physician to be deemed negative.

Is there anything I can do as the patient to prevent the spread of MRSA?

While in the hospital, make sure that all your physicians, nurses and other healthcare providers clean their hands with soap and water or the alcohol-based sanitizer before and after caring for you.

If you do not see your healthcare providers cleaning their hands, do not be afraid to ask them to do so!

If I have MRSA, can my visitors get the germ when visiting me?

The chances of a healthy person getting MRSA while visiting a person who has the germ is very low. To decrease this chance even more, visitors should clean their hands before they enter and leave your room. They should also wear the protective gowns and gloves that are provided by the hospital when visiting with you.

If I have an MRSA infection, is there anything special I need to do when I go home?

The following are helpful tips to prevent another MRSA infection and to prevent spreading MRSA to others:

- ✓ **Clean your hands** often, especially before and after changing any wound dressings or drains that you may have.
- ✓ **Take all of the antibiotics prescribed** by your physician. Do not skip doses, take half doses, or stop the medication before the medication course is finished.
- ✓ **Those who live with you should clean their hands often**, especially before and after helping you with your care.
- ✓ **Keep any wounds and dressings clean.**
- ✓ **Avoid sharing** personal items like razors, towels, blankets
- ✓ **Wash and dry** your clothes and bed linens in the warmest temperatures recommended on the labels
- ✓ **Tell all of your healthcare providers** that you have MRSA. This includes healthcare providers during subsequent trips to the hospital, trips to the physician offices, home health agency staff, and therapists.

Source: <http://www.cdc.gov>

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