

# Reducing the risk of MRSA infection

## Infection Prevention

Information for Patients & Carers

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## What is MRSA?

**MRSA** stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* is a very common germ (bacteria). Around 30% of the population carry this on their skin or in the lining of their nose and throat. Usually this bacteria is harmless. Sometimes it can cause skin infections such as boils or abscesses and can infect wounds. These infections are normally mild and are easily treated.

Certain strains of the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria have become untreatable by (but not all) common antibiotics (like penicillin). So these antibiotics do not work for treating the infection. These strains are called MRSA. It can be difficult to treat if it does cause an infection.

## How will I know if I have MRSA??

We can only find out if you have MRSA through tests in a laboratory. If you are being admitted to a high risk ward or if you have had MRSA before, we will screen you when you are admitted to the hospital. We can also screen you before your planned admission for example at a pre-assessment clinic.

A member of staff will use a cotton bud to collect a sample:

- from inside your nose
- from near your bottom (perineum)
- from any medical devices (such as a catheter used to collect pee)
- from any wounds or breaks in your skin.

**Health information and support is available at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)  
or call 111 for non-emergency medical advice**

Visit [www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.leicestershospitals.nhs.uk) for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals  
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact [InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)

## **What happens if I have MRSA?**

We will prescribe you a nasal antibiotic cream. You or a nurse will apply this to the inside of both of your nostrils. You will need to do this 3 or 4 times a day. How many times you need to apply this cream depends on which type of nasal cream you have. The nurse will make sure you know how to apply this.

## **Will it delay my hospital admission or discharge?**

If you have MRSA, it is important that you let the hospital know before or when you are admitted. This will help us to care and manage you safely. This will not delay or stop your admission.

If you are in hospital and are medically fit, having MRSA will not delay your discharge to your own home or to your care home.

## **How can I reduce the risk of MRSA infection?**

All adults (and some children's wards) must use the antibacterial liquid soap that we give them while they are staying in hospital. We will give you this antibacterial soap for personal use when you are admitted to hospital. It may also be available in the ward shower cubicles. You should use this for your entire stay at the hospital.

For the antibacterial soap to work you must:

- use it every day.
- wet the skin and apply directly onto your skin using a clean wet cloth or hands.
- wash from head to toe, avoiding your eyes.
- wash around your nostrils.
- wash well between the folds of the skin like under your arms and between your legs.
- wash your hair using the liquid soap 2 times a week.
- leave the soap on your skin or hair for at least 30 seconds before rinsing off from head to toe.
- if you want to use your own shampoo, conditioner or shower gel, use it after rinsing off the antibacterial liquid soap.

## **How can you stop the spread of MRSA?**

MRSA can be spread by hands. Hand hygiene is the best way to stop it spreading. You can wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol hand sanitiser.

It is important for carers and healthcare workers to wash and dry their hands thoroughly between caring for people. Healthcare workers may use an alcohol hand rub or sanitiser to help make sure their hands are clean. Hand sanitiser only works on clean hands. You should not use it on dirty hands.

### **Always wash your hands with soap and water:**

- when they look dirty.
- before preparing or eating food.
- after using the toilet.
- after coughing or sneezing into your hands or a tissue or hanky.
- after handling soiled linen, bedding or nappies.

Following these instructions will help stop harmful bacteria staying on your skin which can cause an infection.

### **Am I more at risk if I'm pregnant or breastfeeding?**

If you are pregnant, there are no extra risks from MRSA if you are fit and healthy.

Breastfeeding is safe for you and your baby. Follow the usual advice for breastfeeding and if you experience any symptoms contact your GP, midwife or health visitor for more advice.

### **What advice should visitors/ carers follow?**

Healthy people like babies, children and pregnant women, are not normally at risk of MRSA infections.

We advice friends and families to wash their hands thoroughly when visiting. They should regularly wash your hands whilst visiting. Visitors need to make sure all cuts and grazes on the hand are covered with a waterproof dressing.

Visitors/ carers do not need to wear gloves and aprons if they are just talking to you. But hands **must** be cleaned when entering and leaving the ward. Visitors and carers are warned when helping with personal/ hygiene needs such as washing. Visitors/ carers must clean their hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand rub after helping with personal care, and after removing gloves.

### **What advice should I follow when I go home?**

MRSA is not usually a problem for healthy people. You do not need to take any action or change your social activities. You just need to make sure you have good hand hygiene.

Your laundry can be washed normally with the rest of your household wash. Do not wash them normally if your clothes are soiled with body fluids. You will need to wash them separately using the warmest temperature recommended on the labels.

Nursing staff will give you more information before you go home if needed. Your GP will be told about of any results.

## What if I am discharged before my screening test results are available?

If your test results show you have MRSA we will write to tell you. If you live in a care home, we will let the manager know of the result. We will also tell your GP. Your GP will talk with you and arrange any treatment with you if needed.

## Stopping the spread of infection at Leicester's Hospitals

To stop the risk of healthcare related infections across our hospitals we have a dedicated Infection Prevention Team (0116 258 5448) and policies. These policies are evidence based and regularly reviewed. We closely monitor infection rates across our hospitals. Any risks and trends are reported to our Infection Prevention Assurance Committee, our Board of Directors and Public Health England.

اگر آپ کو یہ معلومات کسی اور زبان میں درکار ہیں، تو براہ کرم مندرجہ ذیل نمبر پر ٹیلی فون کریں۔  
على هذه المعلومات بلغة أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال على رقم الهاتف الذي يظهر في الأسفل  
જો તમને અન્ય ભાષામાં આ માહિતી જોઈતી હોય, તો નીચે આપેલ નંબર પર કૃપા કરી ટેલિફોન કરો

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਹੋ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਨੰਬਰ 'ਤੇ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ।  
Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku, proszę zadzwonić pod podany niżej numer telefonu

If you would like this information in another language or format such as EasyRead or Braille, please telephone 0116 250 2959 or email [equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk](mailto:equality@uhl-tr.nhs.uk)