

WHAT IS MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common bacterium that lives on human skin. This is normal and does not usually cause a problem. But sometimes, *Staphylococcus aureus* causes boils, abscesses, or other infections.

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. MRSA is an antibiotic resistant bacteria. This means that many antibiotics do not kill MRSA.

WHAT HAPPENS IF SOMEONE WITH MRSA IS ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL?

Health care providers work to stop MRSA from spreading to other patients. The actions that stop germs from spreading are called infection prevention precautions.

Precautions for MRSA are:

- ▶ A “Contact Precautions” sign will be on the patient’s door. This sign will tell people what protective equipment they should use before going into the room. Protective equipment includes gowns, gloves, eyewear, and masks.
- ▶ Patients with MRSA **must not** use shared patient spaces on the unit. Shared patient spaces include the patient lounge, kitchen, school room, and play room.
- ▶ Every person that enters or leaves a patient room must clean their hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer.

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY AND VISITORS?

- ▶ **Family or visitors that are MRSA positive must not** go into shared patient care areas on the unit. Shared patient care areas include the family kitchen, family lounge, and school room. They can access public areas, like the cafeteria, outdoor spaces, and coffee shops.
- ▶ **Family and visitors who have symptoms of infection must not** go to shared patient care areas. Symptoms include fever, rash, diarrhea, vomiting, cough, or runny nose. Family and visitors with any of these symptoms should delay their visit to the hospital until the symptoms of illness have gone away.
- ▶ **Family and visitors must** wash hands before entering shared patient spaces, like the playroom, teen lounge, school room, patient kitchen.

DOES MRSA GO AWAY?

Sometimes MRSA goes away. Often, it does not. Some people have MRSA on their skin, nose, or other areas, but do not have symptoms of an infection. Health care providers call these people ‘carriers.’ Carriers do not need treatment for MRSA.

HOW IS MRSA TREATED?

Some people may get an MRSA infection. If an infection develops, your health care provider will decide what treatment is needed. Skin infections are the most common and may be treated with antibiotics, local skin care or a combination of both. Local skin care may include draining boils or abscesses by a doctor or other health care provider.

It is important that if you are given an antibiotic, you take all the doses even if the infection is getting better, unless your health care provider tells you to stop taking it.

HOW CAN I KEEP OTHERS FROM GETTING MRSA?

1. **Remind everyone to clean their hands** with soap and water or use hand sanitizer.
2. Keep wounds, cuts and scrapes clean and covered until they are healed.
3. Do not share personal items. Use your own:
 - Towel
 - Washcloth
 - Razor
 - Soaps
 - Creams
 - Lotion
 - Cosmetics
 - Toothbrush
 - Comb
 - Nail files
 - Other personal items
4. Use your own sports equipment. Sharing sports equipment spreads MRSA among athletes.
5. When you do laundry, use the regular cycle of your washer and dryer. This will kill any bacteria.
6. Keep your home, office, and car clean. Common household cleaning products work well.
7. Shower or bathe regularly with soap and water
8. Always tell your health care providers if you or your family member has MRSA. This helps health care staff to keep others from getting MRSA.

QUESTIONS?

This information has been provided by Infection Prevention and Control, Provincial Health Services Authority. If you have questions about MRSA contact your doctor or an Infection Control Practitioner, Monday to Friday between the hours of 8:00am and 4:00pm, at 604-875-2345 ext. 6135.

The most important thing you can do to prevent the spread of infection is to clean your hands.



* The information in this pamphlet is intended solely for the person to whom it was given by the health care team.

Developed By

Infection Prevention and Control, PHSA

Version History

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20-Sept-2019	C-0506-14-60373 What Is Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)? Information For Patients, Families And Visitors	Approved at: Infection Control Committee

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