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# How to use your MRSA screen postal kit

## Introduction

This information leaflet is for people who need screening for MRSA before they go into hospital for an operation or any other treatment.

Please read the instructions before carrying out the procedure. If you have difficulty taking the swabs yourself, ask someone to help you.

## Why do I need to have MRSA swabs taken?

It is important to have swabs taken and tested for MRSA. This is to check if you are carrying the MRSA germ. If the swabs are MRSA positive, you will be given an antimicrobial body wash for your skin and nasal ointment that should be put inside the nostrils. This will reduce the numbers of MRSA before your operation or procedure. Topical treatment is painless and usually well tolerated by patients.

Being a carrier of MRSA is nothing to be alarmed about; it is quite common. You can carry MRSA without having any symptoms.

## What sort of treatment will I need if I am MRSA positive?

Antiseptic treatment for MRSA helps stop wound infections. The recommended treatment is:

- A body wash/liquid soap and an ointment which you will need to apply to the inside of both your nostrils.

You will be advised how to use this treatment.

## Why do I have to screen myself at home?

You have been asked to take your own MRSA screen so that you do not need to make another visit to the hospital.

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### What will I use to do the swabbing?

You will be sent or given a screening pack which contains the following items:

- 2 labelled capped swabs.
- A container of sterile water or sodium chloride (salt water) - this is for moistening the swabs before you use them.
- A microbiology request form - this will have already been completed for you and labelled with your personal details.

### Preparing the contents of the screening pack ready for use

1. Clean and dry the surface that you will be using for the test.
2. Wash your hands. We do not want the swab to pick up other germs before or during the swabbing process.
3. Remove all the contents from the pack and place them onto the clean flat surface.
4. Open the container of sterile water or sodium chloride (salt water) and place upright on the flat surface.
5. Break the seal on the swab tube, labelled 'Nose', by twisting the cap. You should then pull the swab to remove it from the tube. Keep hold of the swab and place the swab tube on the flat surface.

**Please note:** When removing the swab, it is important that you do not touch the length of the swab or the cotton wool tip. Continue to only hold the red end of the swab.

1. Keeping hold of the swab in one hand, carefully take the opened container of water or sodium chloride in the other hand. Turn the container upside down, gently squeeze the container and moisten the swab by letting a few drops fall onto the tip. Do not put the swab down.



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2. Put the container of water or sodium chloride back (upright) on to the flat surface.
3. Holding the moistened swab by the red cap place it inside your nostril. Now rub gently inside the nostril using a rotating action for 5 to 10 seconds. Using the same swab repeat this inside the other nostril.
4. Carefully place the swab back into the tube, again making sure not to touch the length or end of the swab.
5. Place the tube back on the flat surface. Close the tube by pressing the red cap back on to the top.

**Swabbing the groin area – the second swab**

1. Take the second swab tube labelled 'Groin' and hold the swab by using the red cap at the end of the tube.
2. Break the seal on the swab tube by twisting the cap and then pull the swab to remove it from the tube. Keep hold of the swab and place the swab tube on the flat surface.
3. Remember that when removing the swab do not touch the length of the swab or the cotton wool tip.
4. Keeping hold of the swab in one hand, carefully take the opened container of water or sodium chloride in the other hand. Turn the container upside down, gently squeeze the container and moisten the swab by letting a few drops fall onto the tip. Do not put the swab down.
5. Put the container of water or sodium chloride back upright on the flat surface.
6. Holding the moistened swab by the red cap, place the swab against the skin in the crease of one side of your groin. Move the swab backwards and forwards against the skin for 10 firm strokes.



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7. Now repeat this action on the other side of your groin area using the same swab.
8. Carefully place the swab back in its tube, again making sure not to touch the length or tip of the swab.
9. Place the tube back on the flat surface. Close the tube by pressing the red cap back on to the top.

**After taking my swabs what should I do next?**

1. Place both swab tube containers in the plastic bag attached to the microbiology request form.
2. Remove the sticky tape at the top of the bag and fold over the top of the request form. This will seal the bag.
3. Dispose of any left-over water or sodium chloride by pouring it down a sink with running water. Put the container in a bin.
4. Wash your hands after taking your swabs.
5. Take the bag containing the swabs to your GP's surgery and hand it in at reception. If you are unable to get to the surgery, please ask someone to take the swabs for you.
6. The GP surgery staff will place it with other samples ready to be transported to the local microbiology laboratory at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital.

If after reading this instruction leaflet you do not understand what to do, please contact the hospital 'Pre-assessment Unit' for further advice.

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## Making a choice

### Shared Decision Making

If you are asked to make a choice, you may have lots of questions that you want to ask. You may also want to talk over your options with your family or friends. It can help to write a list of the questions you want answered and take it to your appointment.



### Ask 3 Questions

**To begin with, try to make sure you get the answers to three key questions if you are asked to make a choice about your healthcare.**

1. What are my options?
2. What are the pros and cons of each option for me?
3. How do I get support to help me make a decision that is right for me?

These resources have been adapted with kind permission from the MAGIC Programme, supported by the Health Foundation\* Ask 3 Questions is based on Shepherd HL, et al. Three questions that patients can ask to improve the quality of information physicians give about treatment options: A cross-over trial. Patient Education and Counselling, 2011;84: 379-85

<https://aqua.nhs.uk/resources/shared-decision-making-case-studies/>