

# MRSA screening

## Your questions answered

### Introduction

This leaflet will help to answer some of the commonly asked questions for patients who are being screened for Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

### What is Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)?

There are lots of different types of families of germs or bacteria found on the human body or in the environment. One of these families is Staphylococcus aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is a common type of bacteria which lives harmlessly on the skin and in the nose. This affects about one third of the population and is called 'colonisation'.

People who are colonised are often not ill. Most people will be unaware that they carry these bacteria because it does not usually harm them and they have no symptoms.

Like any germ it can cause an infection, often skin related problems such as pimples or boils. These germs can cause more serious infections if they get into your body through a break in your skin from an operation or other treatment.

When Staphylococcus aureus causes infections, it is treated with antibiotics, for example flucloxacillin. MRSA, (Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) are types of Staphylococcus aureus that have developed resistance to some antibiotics including meticillin, which is why it is called MRSA.

### Why am I being screened?

In accordance with Department of Health recommendations, we as a Trust now aim to screen all patients admitted to hospital and particular groups of patients that attend for Day Surgery procedures. This will allow us to identify colonised patients and reduce the risks of them developing an MRSA infection.

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**Patient  
Information****Who will tell me the results?**

The nurse or doctor looking after you will be able to tell you your results and advise if treatment is needed. Patients attending the hospital as a day case will be contacted by letter.

**How will I be treated if I have MRSA?**

If you are found to have MRSA you will be prescribed an antibacterial liquid body wash to bath or shower with. You will also need to wash your hair with this liquid wash twice during the first 5 days.

You will be given an antibiotic ointment which needs to be applied to the inside of your nose for the first 5 days of treatment. If you have applied the ointment correctly you will be able to taste it at the back of your throat.

If you stay in hospital, you may be asked to move into a single room. This will help to reduce the risk of MRSA being passed on to other patients.

Not all patients with MRSA will be isolated in a single room; this will depend upon your condition and the availability. The ward staff will assess the need for a single room on an individual basis.

**Will I still be able to have visitors?**

Yes – MRSA does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. If someone who wishes to visit has a long-term medical condition, they should speak to the nursing staff.

**How to reduce the risk of spreading MRSA?**

Visitors must wash their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol gel when entering and leaving the ward. Alcohol gel dispensers are positioned at the entrance to the wards and also at the patient's bed side, should you need to use it again.

Aprons and gloves are not necessary for your visitors, unless they are assisting with your care. Please ask the ward staff for advice if you are unsure.

## Patient Information

You should not sit on other patient's beds. Your visitors should not sit on either yours or other patient's beds.

## How do I wash my clothes?

All items of clothing can be washed as normal, preferably separately from other washing. You should follow the normal washing instructions on the garment labels.

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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/>