Advice about MRSA for people not in hospital

If you have MRSA, this leaflet tells you about things you should do in your everyday life.

Easy read
This booklet is about a germ called **MRSA**.

It is an Easy Read version of a booklet called *Advice for those affected by MRSA outside of hospital*.

There are some difficult words in this booklet.

So there is a list of these words and what they mean on page 27.

These words are in **blue** letters in the booklet.

You might like to have someone to support you when you look at the booklet.
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About MRSA

This booklet is about a germ called MRSA

There are lots of different types or families of germs. Some of these germs are on our bodies. Some are in the world around us.

One of these families of germs is called Staphylococcus aureus, or *S. aureus* for short. **MRSA** is a germ which is part of the *S. aureus* family.

About *S. aureus*

Germs in the *S. aureus* family usually live on damp parts of the outside of your body. Places like your:

- nose
- armpits
- groin.

These germs are sometimes on other parts of your body like your hands.
The germs do not usually cause any problems, but they can sometimes cause infections. An infection is when germs attack your body and make you feel sore, hot and unwell.

The germs can cause problems like pimples and boils on your skin. But if they get inside your body they can cause more serious infections.

Doctors can treat these infections with drugs called antibiotics.

When doctors cannot treat these germs with an antibiotic called meticillin it is called MRSA.

**MRSA**

MRSA stands for meticillin resistant *S. aureus*. ‘Resistant’ means that germs are not killed by meticillin. But doctors can treat MRSA with some other sorts of antibiotics.
How does MRSA get into your body?

**MRSA** germs are in lots of places. But they are most common in hospitals and care homes.

The germs do not usually harm people. But if they get into your body through a break in the skin they can cause problems.

People with breaks in their skin like sores, wounds from operations or holes for medical tubes should keep them covered with a **dressing**. This helps to stop MRSA germs getting into the body.

People should also always wash their hands before and after changing dressings or touching wounds. This is because germs are often passed on by hands.

**Normal touching like holding hands or hugging does not usually cause any problems.**
Who has MRSA?

There are 2 sorts of people with MRSA:

People colonised with MRSA
Some people have MRSA on their skin or in their nose that does not make them ill. These people are said to be colonised with MRSA.

People may carry MRSA for a few hours, days, weeks, or even for their whole lives.

Most people do not know that they are carrying MRSA.

People infected with MRSA
If people become ill with MRSA they are said to be infected with MRSA.

The MRSA will have got into a person’s body through a sore or wound. Sometimes it can cause serious chest or blood infections.
What happens if you have MRSA?

People colonised with MRSA
If you are colonised with MRSA you do not usually need treatment.

But if you need medical treatment or an operation, your doctor or other health worker will decide if you need to be decolonised first. ‘Decolonised’ means getting rid of as much of the MRSA as possible.

You can be decolonised in hospital or at home.

This usually means:
• washing your body with special body wash

• washing your hair with special shampoo

• using a special cream in your nose.

These treatments are to get rid of MRSA.
People infected with MRSA

If you are being treated for an **MRSA infection**, you may be given **antibiotics**.

You might take these antibiotics:

- through your mouth
- by rubbing them into your skin
- through a **drip**. A ‘drip’ is a tube that puts liquids or medicines into your blood.

There are some special things you need to do while you are being **decolonised** or treated for an **infection**. This will help your treatment work better.

We tell you what you need to do on pages 24 and 25.
Treatment at home

Your doctor or health worker will decide if it is safe for you to be **decolonised** or treated for an **MRSA infection** at home.

It is usually safe to be treated at home.

Being treated at home helps hospitals to stop **MRSA** spreading.

It is very important to remember to do exactly what your doctor or health worker tells you. And to make sure you do it for as long as they say you should.
What can you do yourself?

It is up to everyone to help stop the spread of **MRSA**.

This means everyone who comes into contact with the NHS, including:

- patients
- health workers
- hospital managers
- visitors to hospitals.

You can play an important part in the fight against **MRSA**. We tell you how you can do this on the next pages.
Be careful about being clean
You should wash your hands often.

Be sure to wash your hands before and after you touch:

- wounds
- dressings
- drips or tubes that go into your or another person’s body.
Be careful looking after wounds

If you have MRSA there is a small risk to some other people.

There is a small risk to other people if they have:

• wounds

• tubes which take drugs or other liquids straight into their blood

• a catheter (a tube which takes wee away from their body)

• bad skin problems.

It is very important that both you and the other person keep your hands clean and wounds and sores are well covered.
Some answers to your questions

How will I know if I am colonised?
If you are colonised you will not have any symptoms because the germ has not caused an infection. (‘Symptoms’ are the aches, pains or feelings you get that tell you that you are ill.) So you will probably not know if you are colonised unless you have had a test for the germ.

How will I know if I have an infection?
If you develop an infection you may feel:

- unwell
- hot
- tired
- that you do not want to eat much.
There are 5 signs that can help you spot any wound infection. This includes an MRSA infection:

1. the wound feels hot

2. redness

3. pus (thick yellow liquid in the wound)

4. swelling

5. pain.

If you think you may have an MRSA infection or if you have any doubts at all, you should ask your doctor or NHS Direct for advice.
Am I a risk to other people?
If you have MRSA, you are not usually a risk to healthy people. This includes older people, pregnant women, children and babies.

What about my personal life?
You can carry on your normal life with your partner and friends. You can still have sex and touch other people.

If you have MRSA, your partner could become colonised. But this is unlikely to be dangerous for them.

You must finish your treatment properly to give you the best chance of getting rid of the MRSA germ. Getting rid of the germ means you are less likely to pass it on to others.

What if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?
If you are pregnant, fit and healthy, there are no extra risks if you have MRSA.

It is safe for you to breastfeed your baby.
But if you have any of these **symptoms**, you should tell your doctor, midwife or health visitor:

- painful breasts
- red patches or lumps around your breasts
- symptoms you get with flu – like a high temperature.

These symptoms could show that you have an infection of the breasts called mastitis. Mastitis may be due to MRSA or to another germ.

**Can my child go to nursery or school?**

If your child has **MRSA** they can go to nursery or to school as normal. You do not have to tell the school or nursery about the MRSA.
Can I live normally and go to work?

If you have MRSA it does not stop you doing everyday things like:

- meeting friends
- shopping
- going to the gym
- swimming.

You should not go swimming if you have a sore or open wound. You should not swim with an open wound even if you do not have MRSA.
You should cover sores and wounds with a waterproof dressing if you are doing any sport.

You will usually be able to go to work as normal.

If you work in healthcare and have an MRSA infection, you should ask your doctor for advice.
Do I have to tell people I have MRSA?
You do **not** have to tell anyone that you have **MRSA**.

But if you need medical care or visit a hospital for treatment, you should tell your doctor or health worker. This is important because they might decide that you need to be **decolonised** before your treatment.

Will I have a screen for MRSA?
Having a **screen** means that samples are taken from some parts of your body and tested for **MRSA**. This will help health workers decide the safest way to treat you.

By 2009, all hospitals will screen patients who are going into hospital for tests or operations where they need to stay in hospital for a while.

By 2011, patients who come into hospital in an emergency will also have a screen.
What about my pet?

The germs that live on people are usually different from the germs that live on animals.

But people’s germs can sometimes pass to animals. **MRSA** is not common in animals, but it is possible for a pet to be **colonised** with MRSA or to develop an **infection**.

It is possible for an animal with MRSA to pass the germs to you. So you should always wash your hands after touching pets, and keep any wounds well covered.
Can I still go to a care home?

Yes. It is safe for everyone in the care home as long as everyone is sensible.

For instance, everyone should wash their hands often. This includes:

- people who live in the home
- people who work in the home
- visitors.
It is safe for you to share a room, as long as you or the other person does not have open sores, wounds, a drip or a catheter. You can also join other people in shared areas.

Again, you should always cover sores or wounds with a dressing.

Your care home should already know about keeping things very clean and safe.
At home

It is important to help stop the spread of MRSA. You do not have to do any special sorts of cleaning. But it helps if you keep your home clean.

Cleaning your house

To lower the risk of spreading MRSA, you should:

• dust furniture

• hooever carpets

• clean your bath, shower, basins and toilets.

You should do these things often using your usual cleaning things.
Doing your washing

To lower the risk of spreading MRSA, you should wash:

- your clothes
- bedclothes and sheets.

You should do this often. Use your usual washing things and the hottest water that you can without damaging your clothes.

You do not have to wash your clothes separately from the clothes of the rest of your family.

You can tumble dry or dry on a line and iron clothes as normal.
Things you can do while you are being decolonised

If you are being **decolonised** or treated for an **MRSA infection**, there are some extra things you can do to help.

These will help get rid of as much MRSA as possible from your body. And they will help lower the chances of you becoming **colonised** again.

(You do **not** have to do these things if you are colonised but not being treated.)

**Here is a list of things you can do while you are being treated:**

**Towels**

Do **not** share towels with other people.

Change your towels every day.

**Washing**

Use your bath or shower as normal. You will probably have a special body wash and shampoo from your doctor.
Clothes
Always put on clean clothes after a bath or shower.

It is also important to wear clean night clothes each night.

Beds
Change your sheets and pillowcases each night.

Shaving
Even if you do not have MRSA, you should not share razors or other shaving things like brushes and soaps. This is because you could cut yourself and let germs into your body.

If you are being decolonised or treated for infection you should only use a pump-action shaving cream or gel rather than a bar of soap.
How to find out more

If you want to find out more about MRSA:

Visit: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

For more information about MRSA for patients in hospital:

Visit: www.hpa.org.uk
## What the words mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>antibiotics</strong></td>
<td>Drugs for getting rid of germs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>catheter</strong></td>
<td>A tube which takes waste away from a person’s body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>colonised</strong></td>
<td>People who are colonised carry the MRSA germ but are not ill</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>decolonised</strong></td>
<td>People need to be decolonised to get rid of as much of the MRSA as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>dressing</strong></td>
<td>A cover to stop germs getting into a wound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>drip</strong></td>
<td>A tube which puts liquids or medicines into a person’s blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>infection</strong></td>
<td>When part of a person’s body becomes diseased</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>meticillin</strong></td>
<td>An antibiotic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>meticillin resistant S. aureus (MRSA)</strong></td>
<td>A germ which cannot be killed by meticillin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MRSA</strong></td>
<td>Short for meticillin resistant S. aureus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>MRSA infection</strong></td>
<td>An infection caused by MRSA</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>NHS Direct</strong></td>
<td>A 24-hour health service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>screen</strong></td>
<td>When samples are taken from parts of a person’s body and tested for MRSA</td>
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If you want more copies of this booklet:

Visit:
www.clean-safe-care.nhs.uk

Write to:
The HCAI and Hospital Cleanliness Team
Room 5E58
Quarry House
Quarry Hill
Leeds LS2 7UE

Telephone:
0113 254 6367

When asking for more copies of this booklet, please ask for Advice about MRSA for people not in hospital – Easy Read version.