

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA)

Patient Information

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a germ (bacterium) that normally lives in the nose, rectum and on skin of healthy people. MRSA is a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* that is resistant to a group of antibiotics including “Methicillin”. MRSA germs are not usually harmful to healthy people, but can cause infection in those who are seriously ill.

How do people get MRSA?

MRSA is spread from one person to another by contact. Caregivers’ hands can become contaminated either by touching the person with MRSA or touching articles or equipment contaminated by MRSA and they can transfer the germ to others. Patients who have been in a hospital or in a rehabilitation or long term care facility are more likely to get MRSA.

How does MRSA make people sick?

Many of the bacteria, that live on or in your body are good for you. MRSA is not usually harmful. It may cause an infection if it enters the body through breaks in the skin, the bladder, or an intravenous catheter site (IV).

What are the symptoms of an infection with MRSA?

Symptoms of an MRSA infection depend on the area of the body affected. A fever is common. If MRSA was found in your bladder, the symptoms would be the same as with a regular bladder infection. If it was in a cut or wound there may be warmth, redness, swelling and pus.

Can infections with MRSA be treated?

Colonization and infection are different. If you are colonized, which means MRSA is not causing any symptoms, you will not need to be treated. Infections are treated with specific antibiotics.

What does the Hospital do to prevent the spread of MRSA?

Hand washing is the most important way for everyone to prevent the spread of this germ and other germs. If you are tested and found to carry

MRSA you may be moved to a private room, and your healthcare provider may need to wear gloves and a gown. During the time you have MRSA, you will be asked to stay in your room; however, you may still have visitors. It is very important that visitors clean their hands upon entering and exiting your room. In the hospital, visitors who provide care to you will need to wear a gown and gloves. Please remind visitors not to use your bathroom. People who are known to be carrying MRSA will be tested on each admission to see if the bacteria are still present.

What special precautions are needed for MRSA at home?

Generally speaking, people in the hospital are sicker and get more infections than people in the community. At home, precautions do not need to be as strict. However, certain steps can help reduce the risk of spreading this germ to family members and other visitors.

Caregivers should wash their hands after providing care. If you have a draining wound, it should be covered with a clean and dry bandage.

No special precautions are required to clean your home. This germ can be destroyed by most household cleaning products. When you clean a room, do the dirtiest areas last. Use friction, and let the surfaces air dry to allow enough contact time with the cleaner to work properly.

You may visit other people and carry on your normal life activities. The most important thing is keeping your hands very clean. If you are planning to visit someone in the hospital, you should talk to the Nurse to make sure you are not placing that person at risk of getting your MRSA.

What do I need to know prior to discharge?

People carrying MRSA need to let healthcare providers know so that steps can be taken to decrease the risk of spreading the bacteria to others.

If you have questions about the information in this document, contact Queensway Carleton Hospital's Infection Prevention and Control at 721-2000, ext. 3777.