

Information for patients with  
**MRSA**

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## What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common germ (bacterium). About 30% of, or 3 in 10, healthy people carry it on the surface of their skin or in their noses without causing them any harm. MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus aureus. It stands for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. It has become resistant to some commonly used antibiotics. However, in most cases, other treatments can tackle MRSA successfully.

Many healthy people carry MRSA bacteria on the surface of their skin or in their noses without developing an infection - this is known as being colonised by the bacteria. However if the bacteria get into the body through a break in the skin they can cause infections such as boils, abscesses or impetigo. If they get into the blood, they can cause more serious infections. The treatment depends on whether you are colonised or infected with the bacteria.

## How do people catch MRSA?

MRSA is mainly spread from person to person by hand contact. In general, healthy people are at a low risk of getting MRSA. People with long-term illnesses, decreased immunity or open cuts or wounds are more vulnerable to MRSA.

## If I have MRSA...

### Will I still be operated on?

Yes. If you are to have an operation you may be given treatment to reduce the number of bacteria before the operation.

### Will I be treated for MRSA?

Treatment of MRSA depends on whether you are **infected** with the bacteria, or only **colonised**.

If you have an MRSA **infection** you will be given antibiotics.

If you are **colonised** with MRSA bacteria you do not need any treatment for MRSA. However as you can infect yourself or others, it is important to reduce the risk. A special antibiotic cream will be applied to your skin or the inside of your nose to destroy the bacteria. You may also need to wash your skin and hair with an antiseptic shampoo and lotion or take antibiotics if necessary.

### Will I be treated differently ?

You may be nursed in a single room or with other patients who are also carrying MRSA. This is to minimise the risk of the bacteria spreading to other vulnerable patients.

### **Will my family be able to visit me?**

Yes. Your visitors do not need to wear protective clothing if they only have social contact with you. They **must** wash their hands or use alcohol hand gel on leaving your room/ bed space.

### **Can MRSA harm my family / friends?**

MRSA does not usually harm healthy people, including elderly people, pregnant women, children and babies. MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems, particularly people who have chronic skin conditions or open wounds.

### **Do I have to be clear of MRSA before leaving hospital?**

No. There is little evidence of spread in the community, even among close contacts of MRSA carriers. Being a carrier will not prevent you from going home or to a nursing or care home. It will also not prevent you from being transferred to another hospital.

### **Will I be able to resume to my routine once I go home?**

Yes. Having MRSA should not affect your normal daily activities, social contacts or prevent you from going to work. If you have specific queries, discuss it with the doctor or nurse looking after you in the community. You may be advised to use

antiseptic shampoo and cream to reduce or remove MRSA from hair, skin and nose.

### **Will I be tested for MRSA again?**

Patients who were diagnosed MRSA positive on admission to hospital, might be tested again after 5 days of treatment.

## Where can I find more information?

If you would like to know more about MRSA, you can:

- Ask a nurse or doctor on the ward who will help you.
- Phone NHS Grampian's Free Healthline 0500 20 20 30.
- Visit [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com)
- Visit [www.hps.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk)
- Visit [www.nhsgrampian.org](http://www.nhsgrampian.org)

## What should I do to reduce the chances of infection, while I am in hospital?

- Wash your hands regularly with hand-hot water and soap (after contact with other patients or staff, especially after toilet visits and before and after eating).
- Please keep the number of visitors to a minimum (2 people at a time). If they are unwell themselves, please ask them not to visit.
- Encourage visitors to wash their hands or use alcohol hand gel before entering and leaving your room. Visitors should not sit on your bed.
- Staff would not mind a gentle reminder to wash their hands or use alcohol hand gel before touching or caring for you.

## What is NHS Grampian doing to tackle MRSA?

We take infection prevention and control very seriously. We use many methods to tackle it. These include regular staff training and hand hygiene campaigns. Screening is just one way we are tackling infections, such as MRSA, in our hospitals. Staff are working hard to ensure that Healthcare Associated Infections (HAI) are reduced, to minimise the risk for patients. Our infection control team are available to advise you if you have any queries.

If you have any questions about MRSA screening, please speak to the nurses or doctors on ward. If you have any suggestions about MRSA Screening, please complete one of the feedback cards located in all wards and departments.

## Data Protection

NHS Grampian and the MRSA Screening Pilot complies fully with the Data Protection Act 1998 in storing and processing patient information. Patient information will be held in the strictest confidence and will be used only for the purpose stated.

## Remember

**Hand hygiene is important to prevent the spread of all bacteria, including MRSA.**

If you would like to know more about MRSA Screening, please contact NHS Grampian's Free Healthline on 0500 20 20 30

For additional copies of this publication call 01224 558638

This publication is also available in large print and on computer disk.

Other formats and languages can be supplied on request. Please call Corporate Communications on (01224) 554400 or email: [grampian@nhs.net](mailto:grampian@nhs.net)

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