

- ◆ Please report to the nurse in charge before visiting.
- ◆ Visitors are not routinely required to wear disposable gloves and aprons.
- ◆ Please do not visit if you are unwell.
- ◆ Ensure any open wound is covered with a waterproof dressing

For a translation of this leaflet or for accessing this information in another format:



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<b>Title of Leaflet</b>	Meticillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA): Information for patients, visitors and staff		
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### Legal Notice

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible. Please therefore always check specific advice or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

## Infection Prevention & Control



**Frimley Health**  
NHS Foundation Trust

## Meticillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA)



Information for patients, relatives  
and carers

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### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA is the abbreviation for Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It is a variety of common skin bacteria, which has become resistant to some of the more commonly used antibiotics. In healthy people, the bacteria can live harmlessly on the skin. It can be carried for a short time (transient carriage) on skin or in the nose, or may be part of a person's skin flora (colonisation). People both in hospital and in the community can be colonised with MRSA (approximately 2-3% of the population), and there is not always a clear reason for this.

### **Who is at risk from MRSA?**

When MRSA has the opportunity to enter the body, it may cause infections or slow down healing and recovery. Most at risk are those having major surgery (vascular or implant surgery) and those who are very unwell and have poor immune systems.

### **How is MRSA spread in hospital?**

MRSA is most commonly spread by hands, either after direct contact with someone who is colonised with MRSA, or after contact with equipment or close patient environment contaminated with MRSA. Therefore it is very important that everybody within the hospital has good hand hygiene, and that the hospital environment and all patient equipment is kept clean. In the community, MRSA, as with all skin bacteria, is generally spread by direct contact.

### **How do I know if I have MRSA?**

MRSA may be identified from specimens taken if you have an infection in the community or in hospital, such as a wound, urinary, or chest infection. MRSA colonisation is generally identified by carrying out an 'MRSA Screen'.

### **What is MRSA Screening?**

Frimley Health targets MRSA screening for groups of patients for whom MRSA carries the greatest risk of infection. This is carried out either as part of pre-operative assessment prior to elective admission, or on admission, if they are admitted as an emergency. Screening is carried out to assess whether you are carrying MRSA.

### **How is the screen carried out?**

The nurse caring for you, will swab the inner surface of your nose and your groin area with two separate swabs. These swabs will show whether you are carrying MRSA on your skin. If you have any open wounds, indwelling devices (such as a urinary catheter), or a productive cough, additional specimens will be taken.

### **Why am I being screened?**

If you are colonised with MRSA, and undergo procedures that may cause breaks in the skin (such as surgery or intravenous line insertion) or your immunity is reduced,

you may be at higher risk of acquiring an infection with MRSA. Identifying colonisation with MRSA can mean actions are taken to reduce the risk of you acquiring an infection with MRSA. Knowing the MRSA status of patients also helps to ensure they are allocated an appropriate bed. We aim to admit all patients colonised with MRSA into single rooms, especially in wards where there are patients who are especially vulnerable to MRSA infection (such as Orthopaedics), to reduce the risk of the bacteria spreading to other patients.

### **When and how will I find out the results of my screen?**

It takes approximately two days for results to be available. Negative results can be available earlier, but positive results may take slightly longer. If your screen is negative, there will be no further action so you are unlikely to be informed of the result unless you enquire. If you screen positive, you should be informed either by the Team caring for you in hospital if you are an in-patient, by your GP, or by the pre-admission Nurse/ Midwife who has carried out your pre-admission screen. If you have not been given a result within a week after the screen was taken, and are concerned, please speak to your named nurse (if you are in hospital) or to your GP.

### **What happens if I screen MRSA positive?**

If your screen is MRSA positive, MRSA 'suppression therapy' will be recommended if you are staying in hospital or are booked for an elective admission to hospital. MRSA suppression therapy consists of using a prescribed body wash for 5 days, and a topical antibiotic cream, which is applied to the inner surface of your nose. An 'MRSA Suppression Therapy Information Leaflet' will be given to you, to explain the treatment more fully. Suppressing the amount of MRSA on the skin can reduce the risk of you acquiring an infection from MRSA.

If, however, you have previously attempted MRSA suppression therapy, and your screen remains positive after the treatment is complete, the suppression therapy may only be attempted one more time. This is to reduce the risk of more antibiotic resistance developing.

### **Can MRSA infections be treated?**

MRSA is not resistant to all antibiotics. Local or more serious infections may still be treated with antibiotics.

### **What can visitors do to help prevent the spread of MRSA in hospital?**

MRSA does not pose a risk to healthy individuals, which includes babies, children, and pregnant women. The only significant risk is to other patients in hospital.

◆ Visitors must ensure that they clean their hands with soap and water or use the alcohol hands rub, before entering and on leaving wards/ departments or single rooms.