

# MRSA

A guide for  
patients and visitors



The purpose of this leaflet is to provide information to you and your family about MRSA.

The word 'bacteria' has been used in this leaflet to describe commonly used terms, such as 'bugs' or 'germs'.

### **What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacteria found on the skin and in the nostrils of approximately 30% of healthy people.

MRSA stands for Methicillin or Meticillin (M) Resistant (R) Staphylococcus (S) aureus (A). MRSA are varieties of *Staphylococcus aureus* that have developed resistance to Methicillin (a type of penicillin) and some other antibiotics that are used to treat infections.

Some people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nostrils and are unaware, because it does them no harm and they have no symptoms, known as 'colonisation'.

MRSA can cause harm if it is able to enter the body and can cause local infections such as boils, or more serious problems

such as wound infections, chest infections or blood stream infections. In order to reduce the possibility of the MRSA causing harm, a simple washing treatment can be used to remove the bacteria from the skin.

### **How is MRSA diagnosed?**

All patients admitted to Papworth are screened for MRSA by taking swabs from specific sites of the body. MRSA can be identified from these samples in the laboratory. The ward staff will inform you of your results usually within 48 hours.

## **What happens if I am found to have MRSA?**

- If you are found to be a carrier of MRSA (MRSA positive) you will usually be moved into a single room, sometimes called barrier/ isolation nursing. This is to ensure the MRSA does not spread to other patients in the ward. A separate leaflet is available for you to explain about being in a single room.
- A member of the Infection Prevention and Control team will visit you within 24 hours of the result becoming available (within normal working hours, Mon-Fri) to explain your result, the treatment and answer any questions you or your family may have.
- You will be given a specific skin wash to shower and shampoo with and some antibiotic cream for your nostrils.
- Your nurse will explain how to use this treatment. This treatment continues for five days, after which you will re-tested for MRSA.

## **Will MRSA delay my operation or any other planned treatment?**

Each patient with MRSA is considered individually and your doctors will decide on the best option for you.

## **What can I do?**

- While you are using the washing treatment, please ask your nurse for clean towels and disposable wash cloths each time you shower.
- If you are mobile, you may be able to exercise out of your room, with footwear worn, provided you do not have close contact with other patients. Please ask your nurse to discuss with the Infection Prevention and Control team before doing so.
- Having MRSA should not prevent you from having any other planned procedures or care while you are in Papworth, but staff may wear protective equipment when they are looking after you to help prevent the spread of MRSA.

### **What about my family and other visitors?**

- It is usually quite safe for you to receive visitors, as MRSA does not harm healthy people, including the elderly and children.
- Visitors are advised to use the alcohol hand gel before entering the room and wash their hands with soap and water before leaving your room.
- It is not necessary for your visitors to routinely wear gloves or aprons; staff will advise if required.
- If you have a visitor who has a long term health problem, then please contact the Infection Prevention and Control team for advice prior to their visit
- Similarly, if someone with MRSA wishes to visit someone in hospital then please ask the Infection Prevention and Control team for guidance.

### **Will I have to stay in hospital longer if I have MRSA?**

- MRSA should not usually delay your discharge home or transfer to another hospital.
- If you have an infection caused by MRSA, you may have to stay in hospital while you are receiving treatment, however your team of doctors will discuss this with you.
- If you are a carrier of MRSA, you may be able to complete your course of treatment at home and have the post-treatment swabs taken at your local surgery.
- If you live in a nursing or residential home, there is no reason for MRSA to delay your discharge.

**What do I need to do about any future admissions to hospital?**

It is important that you tell the admitting hospital that you have been a carrier of MRSA in the past.

**Who else do I need to tell?**

You do not usually need to inform your employer or colleagues, but if you work in a healthcare setting, you should seek advice from the Infection Prevention and Control team and/or Occupational Health.

**Further information**

Please do not hesitate to ask a member of the ward staff, in the first instance, if you have any further questions or ask to contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control team as listed below.

**Clinical Nurse Specialist**

Ext 4685  
Bleep 131

**Infection Control Nurse**

Ext 6032  
Bleep 186



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campaign



**Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust**  
Papworth Everard, Cambridge, CB23 3RE

Tel: 01480 830541

Fax: 01480 831315

[www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk](http://www.papworthhospital.nhs.uk)

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Tel: 01480 364239

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