

METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)

Information Sheet for Patients

WHAT IS MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus are bacteria commonly found on our skin and in our noses. Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a strain that has become resistant to Methicillin over time. Methicillin is a powerful antibiotic that is used to treat many infections.

MRSA is usually harmless until it enters the body through a cut or wound, where it can cause an infection. Patients with MRSA may not always show signs of infection, but can still transmit MRSA to other individuals. MRSA is not a barrier to a patient's discharge.

HOW IS MRSA SPREAD?

MRSA is spread from person to person by physical contact. This includes:

- Touching a person who has MRSA
- Touching contaminated surfaces, after being touched by a person who has MRSA

WHAT PRECAUTIONS ARE REQUIRED FOR MRSA POSITIVE PATIENT IN HOSPITAL?

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop MRSA from spreading to other patients in the hospital. If you are an MRSA-positive patient, these precautions will be implemented:

- A new accommodation (if previously accommodated in a multi bed room)
- Dedicated commode at the bedside if you are ambulatory and accommodated in the room that shares washroom with another patient who is not MRSA positive
- A sign will be placed on your door to remind others who enter your room about the special precautions (such as instructions to clean hands, wear gown and gloves)
- A long-sleeved gown and gloves will be worn by everyone who cares for you, or have contact with you and your environment (including your visitors)
- The room/washroom and the equipment used in the room will be cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands well
- You can do the therapy outside your room, but before leaving the room you must clean your hands with soap and water or with alcohol-based hand rub, wear clean clothes, and any wound or open skin area should be covered

If you have questions or concerns during hospital stay, ask your nurse to call Infection Prevention and Control or email us at Infection.Control@runnymedehehc.ca.

IS MY FAMILY AT RISK WHEN I GO HOME?

- Healthy people at home are rarely at risk for developing an MRSA infection as long as they wash their hands often.
- It is important that you tell your doctor or nurse if you live with someone who has a long-term illness or is getting medical treatments such as kidney dialysis or intravenous (IV) medication.

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO AT HOME?

If you are an MRSA-positive patient:

- Clean your hands often with soap and water or with hand sanitizer, especially after using the washroom and before making food.
- Everyone who might help you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash their hands after contact with you.
- If you share a bathroom at home, clean the toilet and sink at least weekly with a household cleanser.
- Clothes can be laundered in your usual way along with other household clothes.
- No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g., dishes) in the home is required.
- Any contact with a wound or device such as a colostomy bag, Foley catheter or feeding tube should be made with clean hands and gloves; ensure gloves are removed and disposed of immediately after contact, and hands are washed.
- Keep cuts, wounds and abrasions clean and covered until healed.
- Don't share personal care items with others, including bar soap, towels, nail trimmers, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have MRSA. This helps prevent the spread of MRSA to others, and will help your doctor choose the right antibiotics if necessary.

WHEN SHOULD I CALL MY DOCTOR ABOUT MRSA?

- See a doctor if there is any sign of a skin infection (redness, swelling, pain or pus) or skin rash that keeps coming back.
- If you have any questions, contact your family physician.

WHY ARE PRECAUTIONS DIFFERENT IN HOSPITAL AND IN THE COMMUNITY?

- Additional precautions are used in the hospital for patients found to have MRSA. These precautions are usually not required at home or in the community. The difference is related to the environment and the people who may be at risk.
- Hospitals have many sick and vulnerable patients as well as healthcare workers who have frequent contact with many patients. Therefore, additional precautions such as the use of gloves, gowns, dedicated equipment, enhanced cleaning and disinfection and patient isolation are used to prevent the spread of bacteria between patients.
- The above precautions are usually not required at home, because the risk is generally much lower. Most healthy people can live normally with someone carrying MRSA without contracting the bacteria from them. Good hand hygiene, covering wounds or areas of broken skin, regular cleaning and not sharing personal items are usually sufficient.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE PATIENT AND FAMILY?

- It is important to remember that testing positive for MRSA does not mean the patient has an infection. Overall, the risk of developing a serious infection from MRSA is very low.
- Having MRSA does not usually mean the person needs to be isolated at home.
- Family members can usually visit and spend time with the patient, hug, talk and participate in everyday activities and share common household spaces.