Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus) v9

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MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

Patient Information

Infection Prevention and Control Department

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What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus (SA) is a bacterium (germ) that commonly lives on the skin and in the nose of healthy people (approximately 1 in 30). Some strains, such as MRSA are resistant to particular antibiotics making it more difficult to treat as they are not easily killed by more commonly used antibiotics.

How does it affect me?

For most people, MRSA will live harmlessly on the skin without causing any signs or symptoms (colonisation). For some people, there is a potential risk of infection particularly if they have wounds, urinary catheters, a feeding tube or intravenous (IV) drip; or have serious health problems that make them less able to fight off bacteria.

How do I catch MRSA?

MRSA is spread by contact with the environment or people who have MRSA.

How is MRSA identified?

MRSA is identified by taking a swab of the nose and groin and sending it to the laboratory to be tested. Specimens may also be taken of wounds, urine samples (from a urinary catheter), intravenous (IV) drip sites and tracheostomy (breathing tube) or sputum (mucous coughed up from the respiratory tract) where present and appropriate.

Can MRSA be treated?

Yes. MRSA can be successfully treated by prescribed ointments, washes or certain antibiotics.

How do I know when MRSA has gone?

If you have been identified as MRSA positive, you will undergo regular testing whilst in hospital. Once you have had three negative test results at appropriate intervals of at least 48 hours from appropriate swab sites you will be assumed as MRSA clear.

Can MRSA come back?

Yes. Good personal hygiene and hand hygiene is very important to help prevent MRSA coming back. You should avoid touching any areas of broken skin or IV drips, urinary catheters etc. and should keep damaged skin covered.

Why are patients with MRSA nursed in a single room?

Where possible, patients with MRSA are nursed in a single room to prevent the spread of the germ to other patients.

How can the spread of MRSA be minimised?

As MRSA is spread by touch, excellent hand hygiene by staff, patients and visitors is extremely important.

Can visitors to the ward catch MRSA?

Healthy people are at very little risk of catching MRSA. All visitors should see the nurse in charge before visiting. The nurse will give guidance and instruction on the prevention of the spread of infection. Visitors should keep cuts covered with a waterproof dressing and ensure they **decontaminate their hands thoroughly before entering and on leaving** the ward.

Can visitors infect other people?

This is very unlikely providing they undertake good hand hygiene thoroughly before and after visiting.

Are there any special instructions or precautions on discharge from hospital?

MRSA treatment ointments or washes may continue to be prescribed for a short while after discharge. Clothes, bed linen and crockery and cutlery can be washed as normal. It is very important to continue to wash and dry your hands thoroughly to prevent the spread of any infection, including MRSA.

Will my social life be affected?

If you are told that you have MRSA, there should be no restrictions to your work and social life. At home, you will not be at risk to your family, friends, older people, pregnant women, children and babies providing good hand hygiene practice is adopted.

If you have any other questions or would like more information, please contact your GP.



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