



Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

Information for patients from the Infection Prevention and Control Team

What is Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus?

- Staphylococcus aureus (often called Staph) is a bacterium.
- It is often found in the nose and / or on the skin of 2 or 3 people in every 100 of the normal healthy population.
- MRSA is a strain or type of Staph that is resistant to some of the antibiotics commonly used to treat infections.
- People with MRSA may have got it before they came into hospital, or while they were an inpatient.
- Most people with MRSA are said to be carriers or colonised. This means that MRSA is in their nose or on their skin, and sometimes in wounds and other body sites. However, it is not causing that person any harm.

What are the signs / symptoms of MRSA?

Most people with MRSA do not know that they have it. MRSA does not generally cause any signs or symptoms unless an infection is present.

MRSA infection can be found in:

- phlegm
- urine
- blood, and
- more commonly in wounds, including chronic wounds such as leg ulcers.

Signs of infection include:

- a temperature
- pain at or around the site of an infection
- redness / oozing from a wound, and
- changes found from a blood test, which show the patient is fighting an infection.

Is MRSA dangerous?

MRSA does not generally pose any risk to the general public. The people most “at risk” from MRSA are:

- patients with other serious illness / disease, and
- those with open wounds or small breaks in their skin, where they have tubes such as a drip or a drain inserted.

How is MRSA found?

- Swabs are taken from the nose and groin. These will detect whether the person is an MRSA “carrier”.
- Swabs can also be taken from wounds, skin breaks, or other body sites to detect infection.
- If your clinical team suspects you have an infection, they can also take samples of your phlegm, blood, and urine.

The Trust has Guidelines for the Management and Control of MRSA, which are based on national guidelines. All patients are routinely swabbed for MRSA when admitted to hospital. The exception is pregnant women / birthing people admitted to the Maternity wards. Unless they are having a planned caesarean birth.

The swabs are taken either in:

- the pre-assessment clinic, before coming in for planned surgery
- the Acute Medical Unit (AMU), or
- on one of the wards, if the patient is admitted to hospital as an emergency.

Can MRSA be treated?

People with MRSA carriage or colonisation do not need treatment with systemic antibiotics. Systemic antibiotics can be tablets or liquids, used to treat patients with infections. Using antibiotics where they are not needed, can lead to more antibiotic resistant bacteria developing.

If you have MRSA you will receive a 5 day course of treatment. This treatment will reduce the number of MRSA bacteria you are carrying. Treatment includes:

- a nasal ointment, applied to the inside of each nostril 3 times a day for 5 days, and
- a body wash. Use this every time you wash, and rinse thoroughly. You must use this once a day for 5 days.

What precautions are taken in hospital?

- Patients with MRSA may be moved to a side room to prevent them infecting patients who may be at risk.
- If no side rooms are available, patients may be nursed on the open ward with other patients who have MRSA. This is called cohort nursing.
- Patients with MRSA can have visitors. **Visitors do not need to take any special precautions, but they must clean their hands with alcohol hand rub when they leave the ward.**

What happens on discharge from hospital?

If you have MRSA, this does not mean your discharge from hospital will be delayed. You will be discharged from hospital as soon as they are medically fit.

You do not need to take any special precautions at home, other than normal hygiene measures. Please ask a member of staff if you have any questions.

Swabs to find out if you no longer have MRSA are generally not needed. MRSA is only an issue in a hospital setting where patients:

- are ill
- have surgical wounds and / or tubes and drains in place that break the skin, and
- where staff have lots of “hands on” contact.

All patients are swabbed for MRSA before they are admitted to hospital.

Further information

If you have any questions about MRSA, please speak to either the nurse in charge of your ward or the matron. If they cannot help you, please speak to a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team.

- **Kent and Canterbury Hospital**, Canterbury
Telephone: 01227 766877 extension 722-4216 or 722-6810
- **Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother (QEQM) Hospital**, Margate
Telephone: 01843 225544 extension 725-3625 or 725-4234
- **William Harvey Hospital**, Ashford
Telephone: 01233 633331 extension 723-8198 or 723-8202

References

- Coia, J.E., Wilson, J.A., Bak, A., et al. Joint Healthcare Infection Society (HIS) and Infection Prevention Society (IPS) guidelines for the prevention and control of methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in healthcare facilities. *The Journal of Hospital Infection*; Volume 118 (2021): S1 – S39. ([https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701\(21\)00360-1/fulltext](https://www.journalofhospitalinfection.com/article/S0195-6701(21)00360-1/fulltext))

- NHS England. National infection prevention and control manual for England. First published 2022; page updated 2025. (<https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/national-infection-prevention-and-control/>)

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients.

Please let us know:

- If you have any accessibility needs; this includes needing a hearing loop or wanting someone to come with you to your appointment.
- If you need an interpreter.
- If you need this information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or Easy Read).

You can let us know this by:

- Visiting the Trust web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/ais>).
- Calling the number at the top of your appointment letter.
- Adding this information to the Patient Portal (<https://pp.ekhuft.nhs.uk/login>).
- Telling a member of staff at your next appointment.

Any complaints, comments, concerns or compliments, please speak to a member of your healthcare team. Or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 01227 783145 or email (ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net).

Patients should not bring large sums of money or valuables into hospital. Please note that East Kent Hospitals accepts no responsibility for the loss or damage to personal property, unless the property has been handed into Trust staff for safe-keeping.

Further patient information leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals' web site (<https://www.ekhuft.nhs.uk/patient-information>).

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