

What is Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)?

Staphylococcus aureus (also called Staph) are common bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose. In most cases the bacteria are harmless. However, if it enters the body through a break in the skin, it can cause infections that require antibiotic treatment.

Staphylococcus aureus infections are treated with a group of antibiotics containing Methicillin (a type of Penicillin). When *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria develop resistance to these antibiotics they are called methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA, also known as Golden staph). Infections caused by MRSA are more difficult to treat and require different types of antibiotics for longer periods of time.

People at risk of MRSA are those who:

- have other health conditions that weaken their immune system
- have been in hospital, respite care or aged care
- have skin conditions, wounds or implanted medical devices
- have been treated with antibiotics
- live/work/play in crowded environments e.g. schools, gyms.

How do you stop the spread of MRSA?

MRSA is passed on from person to person, usually via hands, or contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

To prevent spreading MRSA:

- clean your hands (with soap and water or with alcohol based hand rub)
 - after touching affected areas e.g. wounds
 - after touching your face or blowing your nose
 - after going to the toilet or grooming yourself
- keep affected areas such as wounds covered.

How will MRSA affect your care?

You may be placed in a single room and staff may need to use gloves and gowns to care for you. Staff are required to perform hand hygiene before and after contact with you or after being in your room. Your doctor will determine if you need to have wound swabs or blood tests and if antibiotic treatment is required.



What about visitors?

Visitors are asked:

- to clean their hands before and after they visit you
- not to use your bathroom
- not to sit on your bed or place personal items on your bed
- not to visit if sick (with flu or gastro type illness) or if they have wounds.

If visitors or family help you with care such as assisting you with dressing or showering then they may be asked to wear gloves and a gown.

What happens when you are discharged?

To prevent the spread of MRSA to other people when you are at home, it is important that you follow these precautions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water and dry thoroughly especially after going to the toilet or before preparing food.
- Keep wounds, cuts and abrasions clean and covered until healed.
- Keep surfaces such as benchtops, bathrooms and toilets clean.
- Use your own towels and face cloths. Do not share these items with other people.
- Avoid sharing grooming items e.g. nail scissors, tweezers, razors and toothbrushes.
- If you are in a sporting team it is advisable not to share towels or drink bottles with team mates.

Make sure you follow instructions and advice provided by your doctor or healthcare provider on how to care for wounds or manage medical devices.

No special requirements are needed for your clothing and towels, eating utensils and dishes. They can be washed in the normal way using detergent or laundry powder. Extra disinfectant is not needed.

You do not have to tell anyone (other than health professionals) of your MRSA status.

What if I am readmitted to hospital?

It is important to tell your doctor or health professional that you have, or have had, MRSA every time you are admitted to hospital.

You can speak with your doctor or health professional or access more information by searching the term "MRSA" at www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au.

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