

INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL

Patient Information



MRSA Screening

Information for patients having an emergency, elective
or planned admission to hospital



Northampton
General Hospital
NHS Trust

What is MRSA?

We all carry bacteria on and in our bodies. MRSA (Meticillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is a bacteria which can cause infections. Approximately 3% of us are carriers of MRSA. This is called colonisation and means the bacteria lives harmlessly on the skin and in our noses. As there are no symptoms, the only way to know if you are a carrier is to be tested (screened).

MRSA is not normally a problem to the general public or people in their own homes but it can affect those who are ill.

Commonly MRSA can cause boils, infected wounds, abscesses, chest and urine infections and less frequently blood stream infections.

MRSA has become resistant to the majority of antibiotics. There are two reasons why this happens:

1. A course of antibiotics is not finished as prescribed.
2. Antibiotics are over used allowing the bacteria to develop resistance.

How do people get MRSA?

Although MRSA is carried in the nose and other body sites without causing problems, the bacteria can spread easily from one person to another by hands or clothes.

MRSA can also be spread by:

- People infecting themselves by touching breaks in the skin
- Passing it on to others by touching a wound or handling equipment around them

- People coming into direct contact with carriers or those diagnosed with MRSA
- Through contact with individuals who have not cleaned their hands - either by washing or using hand sanitiser

It is important for patients, staff and visitors to help prevent the bacteria spreading by careful hand washing, using hand sanitiser and good housekeeping to control dust.

Why we screen for MRSA

If we can find out which people are carrying MRSA harmlessly on their skin before they come into hospital we can treat them. When people are treated for MRSA before their admission they recover much better and the chances of spreading the germ are greatly reduced.

Patients admitted in an emergency will also be screened.

The Department of Health has stated that by April 2010 all patients having elective or emergency admissions will be screened for MRSA.

What tests are done?

Prior to your hospital admission e.g. in Pre-operative Assessment clinic, or on the day of your admission e.g. in Day Surgery Unit or A&E, hospital staff will take a swab from your nose, groin and any wounds using a small cotton swab, or urine from a catheter. This test is painless. The swabs are then sent to the laboratory for testing, which usually takes 2 days.

What happens next?

If your swabs are found to be MRSA **negative** no MRSA was detected, you will not hear from us, and you can proceed with your admission as planned.

If your swabs are found to be MRSA **positive** the team who took them will make arrangements for you to receive treatment to decolonise your skin and nose:

- Octenisan® antimicrobial body wash once a day for five days
- Bactroban® (Mupirocin) nasal ointment three times a day for five days
or Octenisan® nasal gel two times a day for five days

For patients in hospital, this will be written up by your doctor in your prescription chart.

For patients at home this will involve collecting a prescription from your GP or the hospital, which you may have to pay for. You may also then be asked to contact your GP or come into hospital e.g. Pre-operative Assessment Clinic for another set of swabs two days after completing your treatment.

For most people who test positive for MRSA, it will not affect how long you have to wait for your operation and you should not need to be screened again before your surgery. However, for some certain types of operation, for example a hip replacement, the surgeon may wish to see that you have had a set of negative swabs.

On admission to hospital for your operation

For patients coming into hospital for a planned operation you will be given another course of the Octenisan® body wash and Bactroban® (Mupirocin) nasal ointment or Octenisan® nasal gel. You may be provided with a single room during your hospital stay, and you may be given some prophylactic antibiotics just before your operation to reduce the risk of infection after surgery.

If I have MRSA how can I protect those around me?

In hospital:

- Bring in your own toiletries
- Wash your hands regularly throughout the day especially
 - Before eating and handling food
 - After using the toilet
 - After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
 - After handling rubbish
- Keep your bedside table free from clutter
- Report any unclean facilities to the nurses
- Ask your visitors to clean their hands using the hand sanitiser before they enter the ward and when leaving
- Limit clutter and gifts - less clutter allows for more thorough cleaning

At home:

- If you are prescribed antibiotics ensure you complete the course, even if you feel better before you finish
- Ask friends and family not to visit if they are prone to infection
- Ensure visitors and carers wash their hands before and after visiting you
- If the district nurse is visiting to dress your wounds, ensure pets are kept away
- Wash bedding and laundry at the highest temperature that the fabrics will allow. Normal soap powder is fine to use

Please ask the person taking the swabs if you have any other questions.

For further information contact:

The Infection Prevention and Control Team
Northampton General Hospital NHS Trust
Cliftonville
Northampton NN1 5BD
Telephone (01604) 545785

Or

Your GP surgery.

Useful websites

www.nhs.uk

www.northamptongeneral.nhs.uk

Other information

Northampton General Hospital operates a smoke-free policy. This means that smoking is not allowed anywhere on the trust site, this includes all buildings, grounds and car parks.

Leaflets, information, advice and support on giving up smoking and on nicotine replacement therapy are available from the Stop Smoking helpline on 0845 601 3116, the national helpline on 0300 123 1044, e-mail: smokefree@northants.nhs.uk and pharmacies.

Car parking at Northampton General Hospital is extremely limited and it is essential to arrive early, allowing ample time for parking. You may find it more convenient to be dropped off and collected.

This information can be provided in other languages and formats upon request including Braille, audio cassette and CD. Please contact (01604) 523442 or the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) on (01604) 545784, e-mail: Pals@ngh.nhs.uk

Reference: Coia, J. and Duckworth, G. et al. (2006)
Guidelines for the control and prevention of methicillin - resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) in healthcare facilities by the joint BSAC/HIS/ICNA Working Party on MRSA.

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