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## Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA) - Information for Patients

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### What is MRSA?

MRSA is a germ (bacteria) that cannot be killed with the usual antibiotic medicines. MRSA can be carried in the nose and on the skin. Anyone can be a carrier and not know it. MRSA is usually not harmful to healthy people but may cause infection in sick people.

### What is the difference between colonization and infection?

Colonization is when the MRSA bacteria are present on or in the body without causing illness. Infection is when the bacteria are making a person sick.

### How do I get MRSA?

MRSA has been found in hospitals, long term care facilities and in the community. It is mainly spread by contact with unwashed hands. It is not passed through the air. To prevent spreading MRSA, it is important that everyone perform good hand hygiene before entering and on leaving your room/home.

### Who is likely to get MRSA?

It is never just one factor but a combination of many factors that can cause you to get MRSA. The people most likely to get MRSA have been in a hospital or a nursing home.

### What can I expect in the hospital if I am diagnosed with MRSA?

- Because hospitals are filled with people who are sick and more likely to develop an infection, special precautions are needed to prevent the spread of this resistant bacteria.
- You will be placed on Contact Precautions.
- You may be moved to a private room and the people who visit or provide your care will be wearing a gown and gloves.
- There will be a sign placed outside your door indicating what your caregivers/visitors will need to do.
- Some of your supplies / equipment used in your care will be left in your room.
- You will be asked to stay in your room, except for special circumstances.
- Treatment will be ordered for you. This will consist of a daily bath/shower using a special soap and a cream that will be applied in your nose and on open areas on your skin. You may also need to take oral antibiotics.
- When your treatment is complete, your swabs will be repeated. After three consecutive swabs that are negative, you will no longer require precautions.

### What do I need to do at home if I have MRSA?

If you are colonized or infected with MRSA at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading the bacteria to your family is small. But, we do recommend you practice the following:

- Everyone who might help you should wash his or her hands after contact with you.
- If you haven't completed your treatment, finish your treatment and make arrangements for follow up screening with your family doctor or homecare nurse.
- No special handling of trash/garbage is required.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have MRSA. This helps prevent transmission to other patients.
- No special precautions are required for visitors to your home.
- You may resume normal activities.

**Good hand hygiene is the most important infection control practice. When washing hands:**

- Use warm running water and soap.
- Lather and rub hands together, paying attention to fingertips, cuticles, around rings and under nails.
- Spend at least 15 seconds lathering and washing hands.
- Rinse hands thoroughly and pat dry.
- Turn off the taps with paper towel.
- Apply lotion several times throughout the day to help prevent dry, cracked skin (which can be an opening for infection).

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