

## Will I have to be admitted to hospital?

Most patients who are colonised with MRSA do not usually have to be admitted to hospital. Treatment can be given at home.

## Will I need treatment for MRSA when I go home?

If you have a local or serious MRSA infection, you may need treatment. Your local GP will be advised of any treatment that is required. You should ask any visitors to your home to make sure they wash their hands on arrival and departure.

MRSA infection is not confined to hospitals. Outside hospitals, people may carry MRSA without it causing harm to themselves or others.

Good hygiene can assist in reducing the spread of MRSA and many other infections. The single most important measure in reducing cross-infection is the thorough washing and drying of hands.

## Where can I get more information about MRSA?

Additional information is available on the Infectious Disease section of the Health Protection Agency website [www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk).

## Reducing the risks

Research has demonstrated that some organisms have become resistant to certain antibiotics. MRSA is an example of a resistant organism. In response to this, local GPs are provided with guidance on which types of antibiotics can be prescribed.

There are also ways you can help reduce the risks:

**Antibiotics** - Take responsibility when you are prescribed antibiotics - always ensure you complete the prescribed course.

**Alternative treatment** - Be aware that not all illnesses, such as viral infections, can be treated by antibiotics.

**Handwashing** - If you are visiting patients in hospital, please ensure that you wash your hands, on arrival and departure.

Do not be afraid to check if staff or visitors have washed their hands.

## Infection control is everyone's business

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## MRSA Screening

### Information for patients



Information for patients about MRSA screening

This leaflet can be provided in other formats or languages by phoning 01935 385020

## What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. It is a variety of a common germ called staphylococcus aureus.

The germ lives completely harmlessly on the skin and in the nose of about one third of the population. It is more common on skin that is broken - if you have a cut, a sore, or a rash such as eczema.

## How can MRSA affect me?

Most people who have MRSA are described as being colonised. This means that MRSA is present in the nose and/or skin but is not harmful to that person's health. People who are colonised will have no signs or symptoms of infection.

MRSA can cause problems when it gets the opportunity to enter the body. This is more likely to happen to people who are already unwell or undergoing invasive surgery.

MRSA causes abscesses and boils, and it can infect wounds. These may be accidental wounds such as grazes or deliberate wounds such as those made for a drip or during surgery.

These are called local infections. They may then spread into the body and cause serious infections such as septicaemia (infection of the blood).

MRSA is resistant to flucloxacillin (a type of penicillin) and some of the other drugs that are commonly used to treat infections.

## How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

Patients who have MRSA do not look or feel different from other patients.

## Why am I being swabbed for MRSA?

NHS Somerset encourages screening for those patients who have been identified as being at increased risk from MRSA colonisation or infection. This approach aims to reduce the risk of further spread or serious infection occurring in the community. It also supports the screening of all patients requiring admission to a hospital within Somerset.

A nurse will take swabs from your nose and groin, and from any wound sites you may have. If you have an indwelling catheter, a specimen of sterile urine will also be collected.

## If the swab is positive, what treatment will I have?

If MRSA is found, you will receive the following treatments, either as an inpatient (in the case of hospital patients), or via your GP:

- Antiseptic body wash to be used once a day for five days
- Antiseptic hair shampoo to be used once during the five days of skin treatment
- Antibiotic cream applied to both nostrils three times a day for five days

This is known as decolonisation.

If you have a local infection such as an infected wound or if you have a serious infection, you may be treated with oral antibiotics that kill MRSA.

## Can I have visitors?

MRSA does not usually infect healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems. Please check with your doctor if you have any concerns.