

Infection prevention and control

Information for patients with MRSA

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. Staphylococcus Aureus is a bacterium or germ found on about a third of the population, especially in the nose and throat and on the skin. MRSA is a variety of this germ that is resistant to a type of penicillin called Meticillin and some other antibiotics that are commonly used to treat infections.

When someone carries this germ, they are said to be 'colonised'. So long as MRSA stays in the nose and throat and on the skin it will cause no harm, but if it spreads to a wound or into your body through a break in the skin, it can cause an infection which is then difficult to treat. MRSA can easily spread to other vulnerable people. Because of this extra isolation measures are necessary.

How did I get MRSA?

The MRSA may have been on your skin before you came into hospital, or you may have acquired it since.

How is MRSA spread?

It usually spreads by human contact and by invisible particles on equipment and furniture, but it is most easily transferred by the hands.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

We try to ensure that all our information given to patients is accurate, balanced and based on the most up-to-date scientific evidence. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact patient.information@christie.nhs.uk

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.



Contact The Christie Hotline for
urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



What can I do to help?

Good personal hygiene is an important part of your treatment, so take a daily bath or shower. It is important not to socialise with other patients. This helps to prevent the spread of MRSA.

You can usually leave your room to have tests in other departments. Your nurse will inform these departments about the MRSA before you go.

Similarly, if you are going to transfer to another hospital your doctor or nurse will inform them about your MRSA before you arrive. If you are going to go to another hospital for treatment in the future you should inform them about your MRSA.

Please don't feel that these extra precautions are singling you out. They are intended to protect you and other patients.

What is the treatment for MRSA?

If you have an infection and are unwell, we may give you antibiotics. If you have a wound infection, an appropriate dressing will be used. If you are 'colonised' with MRSA or have an infection we may prescribe some treatments to help remove the MRSA from your skin and nose. These will be:

- an antibiotic nasal ointment
- an antiseptic mouth wash to gargle
- an antiseptic skin wash

All three of these treatments should be used over 5 days only. A repeat course may be given only if it is necessary, following advice from the infection control nurses.

How do I use the treatment?

Wash your hands before and after applying the ointment. **The antibiotic nasal** ointment should be used twice a day. Place a small amount on to a fingertip and apply just to the inside of the nostrils and pinch them together for a few seconds.

The **antiseptic mouthwash** should be used as a gargle 4 times a day after meals. It is important to keep your teeth and/or dentures clean.

The **antiseptic body wash** should be used once a day instead of your regular soap or shower gel. Apply to wet skin, wash vigorously especially under your arms and around the groin, rinse off and dry your skin. You can continue to use the body wash while further swabs are taken.

Where will I be cared for if I have MRSA?

We will care for you in a single room at The Christie. This will help to prevent the spread of MRSA to other patients. The doctors and nurses will wear gloves and aprons whilst caring for you and wash their hands thoroughly. Your environment will be kept as clean as possible.

Will MRSA affect my visitors, family and friends?

MRSA is not a risk to healthy people and so we encourage you to have visitors. Visitors should wash their hands carefully before leaving the room. Staff will advise them not to visit other patients on the ward whilst visiting you. Visitors do not have to wear gloves and aprons.

Can I still go home?

You can still go home if you are colonised with MRSA. If you have an infection, this will depend if it is making you feel unwell, as not all infections will.

MRSA should not affect any aspects of your normal lifestyle, or any activities you are involved in. If a district nurse will be visiting you at home, the hospital will inform him/her about the MRSA and any treatment that has been prescribed.

Who can I talk to about MRSA?

If there is anything you do not understand in this leaflet, or if you cannot follow any instructions for any reason, please speak with the ward staff or ask them to contact a member of the infection prevention and control team.