

Is my family at risk when I go home?

- Healthy people at home are rarely at risk for an MRSA infection. MRSA is an infection that is picked up in hospitals. This is why no special precautions (other than hand washing) are needed when you are at home with your family.
- It is important that you tell your doctor or nurse if you live with someone who has a long-term illness or is receiving medical treatments such as kidney dialysis or intravenous (IV) medication. This person maybe at risk for MRSA.
- Once at home, you and your family should wash your hands well. No other special precautions are required.
- If you have a visiting nurse, he or she may wear gloves and/or gowns to prevent spreading the germ to other patients in his or her care.
- MRSA is found primarily on hands and surfaces. Good personal hygiene is important. You will also need to clean surfaces such as countertops cupboards, and sinks with disinfectants (e.g. Mr. Clean, Lysol, etc.).
- Dishes and laundry do not have to be treated differently. Hot water and detergent or a dishwasher/washing machine are good enough.

Once you have had MRSA, you may become a carrier of MRSA. So any time that you go to the hospital or clinic, please inform your nurse or doctor that you had MRSA before.

Washing your hands is very important to prevent MRSA from spreading. It will also protect you from catching other infections.

If you have any questions about infection control, please ask your nurse to contact the Infection Control unit, or contact us at

Infectioncontrol@uhn.on.ca

Please visit the UHN Patient Education website for more health information: www.uhn.ca/patient/health_info.

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What is MRSA?



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Department of Infection Prevention and Control

Information for Patients and Families



Patient Education

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MRSA is an infection. The full name is **Methicillin resistant Staphylococcus aureus**.

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium that is normally found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. This is called carriage.

Some bacteria have become resistant to the antibiotics that we use to treat infections. MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus aureus that is resistant to most antibiotics, including the antibiotic methicillin.

Carriage and infection

Carriage means having bacteria on your body. Healthy people have bacteria on their bodies. Carriage does not usually lead to infection. Infection occurs when the bacteria get into tissues and causes symptoms such as fever or pain.

Staphylococcus aureus can cause minor skin infections such as boils, or infections in a surgical incision site.

Who can have MRSA?

People who have weak immune systems, or who are on antibiotics are at risk of getting MRSA. Patients who have been in the hospital for a long time or have had many medical procedures are also more at risk of getting MRSA than healthy people.

How do you get MRSA?

In the hospital, MRSA may be spread by not washing your hands. If you don't wash your hands and then touch a patient who is at risk, the patient may get an infection. Washing your hands is a simple way to protect against MRSA.

How do we prevent MRSA from spreading in hospitals?

If you have MRSA, these are the precautions that may happen:

- You may be moved to a single room.
- Everyone entering your room will wear a gown and gloves. Masks must also be worn by all who enter your room, even though MRSA cannot be spread through the air. Masks stop your health care workers and visitors from touching their noses and accidentally getting MRSA.
- When leaving your room, friends and family should remove their gloves first, then their gown and mask. They must also wash their hands or use the hand rinse outside the door of your hospital room.
- Your visitors should remain in your room and not go to other areas of the hospital while they are wearing the gown, mask and gloves.
- Patients with MRSA are only allowed to leave their rooms if they have permission to do so. You must wash your hands before leaving your room.

MRSA is a very strong germ and can survive on unwashed hands for hours. This is why EVERYONE must wash their hands after leaving a patient's room.

Common Questions:

Can I have visitors?

- Your family is welcome to visit you. They must follow hospital visiting rules.
- Family and friends should also follow the instructions from the hospital staff and from the signs posted on your door.

Will I have to stay in hospital until my MRSA clears up?

- No, it is safe for patients with MRSA to go home.