



University Hospitals Birmingham
NHS Foundation Trust



MRSA

Information for patients and carers

Building healthier lives

UHB is a no smoking Trust

To see all of our current patient information leaflets please visit
www.uhb.nhs.uk/patient-information-leaflets.htm

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It is a form of a common bug called *Staphylococcus aureus*. This bug lives completely harmlessly in the nose and sometimes on the skin of about one third of people. It is more common on skin that is broken, such as with a cut, a sore or a skin disorder such as eczema. People who have MRSA on their bodies or in their noses, but who are unharmed by it are described as being colonised or carriers.

MRSA can cause problems when it is able to enter the body. This is more likely to occur in people who are already unwell. MRSA can cause abscesses, boils and wound infections. Infection may spread into the blood stream and cause serious infections such as septicaemia (blood infection). MRSA is resistant to Methicillin (a type of penicillin) and to some of the other antibiotics that are commonly used to treat infections.

How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

Patients who have MRSA on their skin and up their noses do not look or feel different from other patients. All patients admitted will undergo an MRSA screen. Your nurse may take swabs from your skin and nose, or take samples of urine or sputum which are then sent to a laboratory. If the laboratory identifies the presence of MRSA, it carries out further tests. The doctor uses the results of these tests to decide what treatment you require.

How did I get MRSA?

It is never possible to be sure exactly how MRSA is acquired. MRSA is found in both hospitals and in the community. Most carriers of MRSA are not aware that they are carriers. Therefore you may have acquired MRSA before you came into hospital, or you may have acquired it in hospital. Some people are more vulnerable to acquiring MRSA, i.e. those suffering from long standing illnesses that are frequently in contact with healthcare.

How does MRSA change the way that you look after me – and what will happen now?

We take steps to reduce the risk of you developing MRSA infection and to prevent MRSA spreading to other patients. You may be moved to a single room in order to prevent MRSA spreading to patients in the ward who do not have MRSA.

MRSA is treated with antibiotics so these will be used in your treatment. If you have MRSA on your skin or in your nose, you will be given an antiseptic wash for your skin and antibiotic cream for up your nose.

Can I have visitors – or can MRSA harm my family and friends?

MRSA does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems. Please ask the nursing staff first if someone who has a long term health problem wants to visit you. Your visitors will not need to wear aprons and gloves when visiting you, but will need to wash their hands after visiting so that they do not spread MRSA to other people. Your visitors can take your clothes home to be washed. There are no risks with this as long as they are washed in a washing machine with detergent and, if possible, tumble dried and then ironed.

Will I have to stay longer in hospital because I have MRSA?

Most patients who are colonised with MRSA do not usually have to stay longer in hospital. If you have an infection, you will have to stay in hospital until you are well enough to be discharged.

Will I need treatment for MRSA when I go home?

If you are colonised with MRSA, you may be treated with the antiseptic body wash and antibiotic nose cream, particularly if you are likely to be readmitted to hospital. If you have an infection with MRSA, you may need to continue antibiotics when you go home as well.

What happens when I come to my outpatient appointment?

Your MRSA status will make no difference to your care as an outpatient. It may be necessary to take more swabs to see if you are still carrying MRSA.

Please remember that hand washing with soap and water is the key method to prevent the spread of any infection. There is a hand wash sink in all single rooms and at the entrances to all wards – please use it on entering the ward and before you leave.

How do I use the antiseptic body wash and antibiotic nose cream?

You will be given the antiseptic body wash and antibiotic nose cream whilst you are in hospital. If you need to carry on using them whilst you are at home, you will be given these as well. Before you start using them, please read the manufacturers' printed information leaflet supplied with the medicines. Please inform a member of the nursing or medical staff if there are any reasons why you cannot use them.

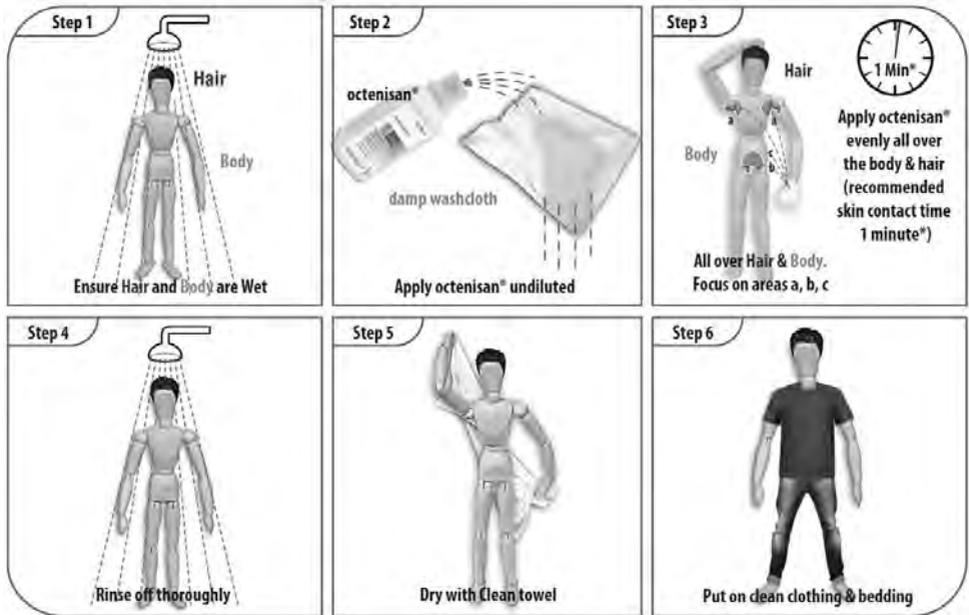
The antibiotic nose cream is used to kill MRSA which can live in your nose:

- Please wash your hands before and after you use the cream.
- Use your little finger or a cotton wool bud to apply a small amount of cream (about the size of a match head) to the inside of both nostrils.
- Press the sides of your nose together for a short while to allow the cream to spread around the inside of your nostrils.
- Replace the cap on the tube and wash your hands.
- Use it in this way three times a day for five days.
- For the cream to work properly it should be applied regularly during the course of treatment. If you forget to use it at your usual time, apply it as soon as you remember and then carry on as before.

The antiseptic body wash is used to kill MRSA which can live on your skin. It can be used if you have sensitive skin:

- Please do not add the body wash to washing/bath water; this makes it too dilute to be effective.
- Wet your skin. If having a shower or bath: turn off the shower or stand out of the bath to apply the body wash.
- Apply the body wash to your skin with a clean washcloth. Begin with your face and work downwards, paying particular attention to areas behind your ears, armpits and groin.
- Leave the body wash on your skin for 1 minute.
- Rinse the body wash off.
- Use the body wash twice a week to wash your hair (on day 2 and 4); apply to wet hair and leave for 1 minute before rinsing.
- You can use your usual products (ie conditioner) afterwards.

- Dry yourself with a clean towel.
- You can use your usual moisturisers/products.
- Put on clean clothing daily.
- Ideally bedding should be changed every day whilst on treatment.



Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Body	Body & Hair	Body	Body & Hair	Body

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For further advice on any of the issues discussed within this leaflet please ask any member of the nursing or medical staff.

Being open

To reduce the risk of healthcare associated infection a number of things have been implemented across the Trust:

- A dedicated team responsible for helping staff maintain a high standard of care in Infection Prevention and Control
- A comprehensive Infection Prevention and Control policy, which is evidence based and regularly reviewed
- All staff are required to attend a yearly education and training update
- A wide range of information leaflets have been produced for patients, carers and the public
- Infection rates are monitored across the trust, any risks or trends identified are reported monthly to the Infection Prevention and Control Committee, the Board of Directors and Public Health England

If you have any questions or would like more information, please contact a member of the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 0121 371 3785 external) or 13785 (internal).

Where can I get more information about MRSA?

1. Data on MRSA for England is available from Public Health England website: www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england
2. You can also visit the hospital website: www.uhb.nhs.uk

References

Illustrations kindly provided by Schülke and Mayr UK Ltd.



The Trust provides free monthly health talks on a variety of medical conditions and treatments. For more information visit www.uhb.nhs.uk/health-talks.htm

Infection Prevention and Control
University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust
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