



## Is MRSA A Risk To My Family and Friends?

MRSA is normally only a problem if it gets into wounds etc. It does not therefore normally affect healthy people, including pregnant women, children or pets. However friends or family must have any wounds or broken skin covered with a dressing, and practice good hand washing. Family members or friends with severe skin conditions, extensive wounds or a poorly functioning immune system should consult with the GP or District Nurse before visiting you.



If you would like further information or have any questions, please call **Brent tPCT Infection Control Team** on **020 8901 1103 / 1055.**

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# MRSA in the Community

## Your Questions Answered



### What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a germ (bacteria) that about 30% of the population carry harmlessly on their skin or in their nose at any time, without any problems. *Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) is a *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria, which has become resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics. For most people this will not cause a problem as they are just 'carrying' the germ, but on rare occasions, it can cause an infection. MRSA can spread between patients, so it may also gain access to a patient who is at greater risk of infection for example those who have wounds or drip sites.

## How Can I Get MRSA?

Many people are 'carriers' of the germ. They may have caught the germ from your surroundings or from another person, by transfer on clothing or unwashed hands. This germ is widespread throughout the UK and many other countries.



## How Do You Know If I Have MRSA?

A specimen such as a wound swab or urine sample may have been sent to the laboratory for routine testing. Alternatively some hospitals may request that you have specific samples taken to look for MRSA before you are admitted, particularly for some types of surgery. These may detect MRSA.

## If I Am Found To Have MRSA, What Is The Treatment?

If MRSA is causing an *infection*, then effective antibiotics will be given to treat the infection. The length of treatment varies from person to person. If you are found to be 'carrying' the MRSA germ, then depending on the circumstances, the doctor may prescribe a treatment programme for you to get rid of the germ. This will include an antiseptic body and hair wash, ointment for the nose, and sometimes a course of antibiotic tablets. Following the treatment the nursing staff will again take further swabs over a period of time, to see if the treatment has been successful. Sometimes the course of treatment will need to be repeated.

Treatment may not always be required if you do not have symptoms of an infection or are not due to go into hospital.

## Will MRSA Affect My Daily Routines?

No. Apart from a few sensible precautions you can continue life as normal. You will need to wash thoroughly every day.



Flannels can be used, but must be rinsed out and hung up to dry between uses. Wearing a clean change of clothes every day and changing your bed linen frequently will also help you get rid of the MRSA. Your clothing and bed linen should be washed as normal. If you see a District Nurse at home, he/she will wear gloves and aprons and wash their hands frequently to help make sure that MRSA is not spread from patient to patient. They may also take further specimens or swabs. This could include swabs from your nose, throat and groin areas, as well as from any wound or a urine sample. You can still attend the GP practice or any hospital outpatient appointment as normal, but you may be requested to attend GP surgeries or clinics at the end of a session or day to prevent the spreading of the germ to other high risk patients.

## What If I Have to Go Into Hospital?

If you are admitted to hospital for any reason, you may be nursed in a single side room or designated area of the ward. This will help prevent the germ from spreading to other "at risk" patients with drips or surgical wounds. If you are admitted to hospital it is important that you tell the ward staff that you either still have MRSA or have had it in the past.