

# MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)

Aussi disponible en français : SARM (*Staphylococcus aureus* résistant à la méthicilline) (FF85-1858)



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# **MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus)**

## **What is staph?**

Staphylococcus aureus (staph) are bacteria that are commonly found on the skin and mucous membranes (nose) of healthy people. About 1 in 3 people are carriers. Most staph bacteria are easily treated with antibiotics if they cause an infection.

## **What is MRSA?**

Methicillin-resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) is a type of staph infection that is resistant to the antibiotics that are usually used to treat staph infections. This is why it is considered an antibiotic-resistant organism (ARO).

MRSA is not easier to “catch” and does not cause worse infections than other staph. It can be harder to treat because there are fewer antibiotics that will work.

## **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA can live on the skin. The most common way it is spread is from direct contact (touching) between people. The best way to avoid spreading MRSA is to practice good hygiene.

## **Screening for MRSA**

It is important for health care providers to know if you are a carrier of MRSA. This will remind them to take special precautions so it will not spread to other patients.

Testing for MRSA is simple. A swab will be taken from the inside of your nose, your groin area, and any open wounds or catheters you have.

The swabs are taken with a swab stick that looks like a Q-tip®. The swab will be sent to the lab for testing.

Your doctor, nurse, or an Infection Prevention and Control practitioner from the hospital will tell you if your result is positive.

## **Care in the hospital**

If you are admitted to the hospital, it is important that special precautions are taken to keep MRSA from spreading to other patients.

These precautions include:

- Having your own room, when possible
- A sign outside your room to remind others who enter about the special precautions
- You will be asked not to use shared spaces in the hospital, including kitchens, patient lounges, other patient rooms, etc.

- Gloves and a gown will be worn by anyone who provides direct care for you, including family/visitors.
  - › ‘Direct care’ means giving hands-on care, such as bathing, washing, moving, changing clothes or diapers, bandage changes, care of open wounds or lesions, and toileting.
  - › If your visitors are providing direct care, they need to wear a gown and gloves.
- **Everyone who leaves your hospital room, including you, must perform hand hygiene** (clean hands well with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub).

## Care at home

- **If you have MRSA at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading it to your family is very small.**
- Use liquid hand soap instead of a bar of soap. Using alcohol-based hand rub is another good way of cleaning your hands when a sink is not available.
- Clean your hands well after personal hygiene and after using the toilet.
- Encourage anyone who helps with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet to wash their hands after contact with you.

- Clean your hands well before preparing or eating food. Everyone in the household should also do this.
- Clean your hands before leaving home.
- Carry alcohol-based hand rub or wipes with you to use when you are outside of your home.

## **Personal care**

- Do not share items such as towels, facecloths, toiletries, and razors.
- Cover any open cuts or draining sores with a clean bandage.

## **Intimacy and sex**

- You can still be intimate with your partner if you have MRSA. Maintaining good hygiene is important for both partners.
- If you are worried or have questions, talk to your health care provider.

## **Cleaning the house**

- No special cleaning of furniture and household items (such as dishes) is needed.
- Regular cleaning of bathroom fixtures such as faucets, taps, bathtubs, and showers with household cleaner will help lower the spread of bacteria.

## **Laundry**

- Clothing may be washed in the same way as the rest of the household laundry.

## **Household waste**

- Place all personal care waste such as bandages into plastic bags to put out with your regular garbage pickup.

## **Visitors**

- You may have visitors.
- The best way to prevent spreading MRSA is to practice good hand hygiene. Hugging, kissing, and shaking hands are OK.
- If you have any concerns or questions, please talk to your health care provider.

## **How long will I have MRSA?**

Healthy people can carry MRSA in their nose, on their skin, or in wounds that do not heal for weeks or even years.

Some people clear the MRSA from their body, but it can come back, especially in people who take antibiotics.

Carriers of MRSA can have tests in the future to see if they still carry the bacteria in their nose or on their skin.

## Communication

**Please tell all of your health care providers that you have MRSA.** This will help them plan your care and choose the right treatment for you. Otherwise, they may prescribe an antibiotic that is not effective, which could delay treatment and create more resistant germs. This will also help prevent the bacteria from being passed on to other patients.

## Antibiotic use

Overuse and misuse of antibiotics can contribute to antibiotic resistance. Antibiotics should only be taken if prescribed by your health care provider. Do not take partial doses or stop taking any medications before completing the entire prescription unless your health care provider tells you to.

### **Remember:**

Washing your hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub is the best way to stop the spread of infection.



