

What are the signs of MRSA infection?

There is no specific 'MRSA disease', as there is with tuberculosis or typhoid. Instead, MRSA can infect a range of tissues and body systems, depending on how it entered the body. As a result, patients may have general and ambiguous symptoms that are common to many different infections caused by other bacteria. Signs of some MRSA infections include a temperature, pus in an infected wound, soreness and possibly swelling. If a patient is suspected to have MRSA, staff take a swab or other sample for analysis in a laboratory to check if a patient is infected with MRSA or any other germs.

How can I prevent it happening to me or others?

You can reduce the likelihood of getting an HCAI by always checking that staff have washed their hands or used an antibacterial hand rub before they touch you and by washing your own hands regularly (after contact with other patients or staff, after going to the toilet and before and after eating).

What if I get an infection?

If you get an infection staff will advise you what you and they will do to treat the symptoms and help you recover.

This may mean that you are moved to a side room or that staff and visitors will wear aprons and gloves when treating you or visiting. This is to prevent other patients getting the infection.

Can I still have visitors, or does MRSA affect them?

Yes, visitors are still allowed. MRSA doesn't normally harm healthy people. However, your visitors should also help to reduce the risk of infection spreading by washing their hands or using an antibacterial hand rub before entering the room and before leaving, and not sitting on your bed.

If you are visiting a patient with an infection then always check with ward staff what you can do to reduce the spread of the infection.

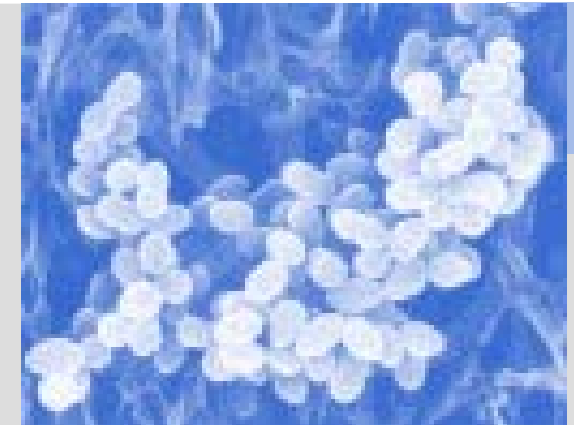
What is Bedford Hospital doing to tackle MRSA?

We take infection prevention and control very seriously and have procedures to reduce the risk of infections happening. Our infection control team are experts in infection and are available to talk to you on if you have any concerns.

All staff here are working hard to try to ensure that healthcare-associated infections are reduced so that the risk to patients is minimised.

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Infection Control MRSA



This booklet explains what MRSA (meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) is, how it can affect patients in hospital and what you can do to help prevent it.

Infections like MRSA: the facts

Some infections that occur in a hospital or healthcare environment are called healthcare associated infections or HCAs.

The most well-known cause of HCAI is MRSA. MRSA is an abbreviation for meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Staphylococcus aureus (SA) is a type of bacteria that can cause infection when it gets in a patient's wound, lungs, bloodstream or other area, but it is normally sensitive to antibiotics such as f lucloxacillin. MRSA is a particular type of SA which is resistant to this group of antibiotics.

What causes the infection?

Infection can happen when bacteria enter part of the body at a place where they are not meant to be.

For instance, they can enter through a wound or cut (including a cut made during an operation); through a medical device that is inserted into the body - such as a drip into a vein or a catheter into the bladder; when we breathe (in the same way as when you catch a cold); when we swallow them, if the bacteria are in food – which can then result in food poisoning.

Why does infection happen in a healthcare environment?

Infection can happen anywhere, but patients in hospitals or care homes are often more vulnerable to infection than people elsewhere.

This is because they have either just had medical treatments or operations that make them more vulnerable, or because the body's natural defences are lowered and so the patient is more likely to be affected by bacteria that enter their system.

Where does MRSA come from?

MRSA is a member of the *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA) family of bacteria. SA bacteria normally live harmlessly in the nose or on the skin of around 30% of the human population; about one tenth of these will have MRSA (3% of the overall population).

Like other bacteria, these are invisible to the naked eye. MRSA bacteria are a particular type of the SA bacteria which are resistant to meticillin, a type of antibiotic no longer used. MRSA infection occurs when the bacteria enter the body through a wound (a wound infection) or when they enter the bloodstream.

We need to take samples to test for MRSA depending on your medical history and your planned treatment.

(called a bacteraemia or blood poisoning). Because the bacteria can live on the patient's skin, they can sometimes travel into a wound, or onto invasive devices particularly if they end up on the hands of patients, visitors or staff.

The bacteria can easily be removed from the hands by good hand hygiene. That's why it's so important patients, visitors and staff wash their hands or use an antibacterial hand rub frequently.

If I have the bacteria on my skin, do I automatically get MRSA infection?

No. When the bacteria are just on the skin, they do not cause infection. The problem is when the bacteria travel into a wound, the bloodstream or other areas of the body.

But when a person has the bacteria on their skin, they are obviously at more risk of becoming infected and of passing the infection on to others. So if bacteria are found on someone's skin, staff will remove the bacteria.

Can MRSA be treated with antibiotics?

Yes, but not all antibiotics. MRSA is resistant to an antibiotic called meticillin and related antibiotics. However, there are other antibiotics that MRSA is not resistant to, and these are used to treat patients who have MRSA.