hands or used an antibacterial hand rub before they touch you and by washing your own hands regularly (after contact with people, after going to the toilet and before eating). Try not to touch any wounds or drips.

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 single room or that staff will wear aprons and gloves when treating you. 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 expert infection control team are available to talk to you 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.

HAND HYGIENE
The role of hand hygiene can help us prevent the spread of infection. Antibacterial hand gel or soap and water may be used.

Effective hand washing
- Wet hands thoroughly before applying soap.
- Vigorously rub all surfaces of both hands with soap lather.
- Pay special attention to the finger tips, thumbs and between fingers (these areas are frequently missed when washing hands)
- Rinse off all the soap under running water and dry hands thoroughly
- Always cover cuts with waterproof plasters.
- When you can, apply hand cream as this helps to prevent dryness and chapping.

Where can I get more information?
Further information can be obtained from Public Health England. If you require further information during your stay please speak to the nurses and doctors in charge or contact a member of the infection control team.
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 (called a bacteraemia or blood poisoning). We need to take samples to test for MRSA depending on your medical history and your planned treatment.

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 the skin, disinfectant shower gel and antibiotic cream may be prescribed to reduce the number of 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.

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...