



Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common bacteria or germ which can live in the nose, on the skin, or in the lower intestine. Sometimes people develop infections with *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria and require treatment. When antibiotics are not able to destroy *Staphylococcus aureus*, the bacteria is called “resistant”, or MRSA. MRSA stands for Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Who gets MRSA?

People with weak immune systems, or those who have taken many antibiotics, are most likely to have MRSA. It can occur in people who have been in the hospital for a long time, or those who have had many medical procedures. People can become **colonized** with MRSA, which means that they are carrying the bacteria but it is not making them sick. Others become **infected** which means that they are sick with MRSA.

How is MRSA treated?

As with other bacteria, MRSA can cause an infection if it gets into a wound, the bloodstream, or another germ free place inside the body. When a person has an infection with MRSA, it can be difficult to treat with common antibiotics therefore stronger and more expensive antibiotics are usually required.

Can MRSA be spread?

MRSA can be spread to other people through touch. It can survive on regular surfaces and on hands. However, with proper use of disinfectants and good hand washing MRSA is easy to kill. MRSA does not travel through the air, but if on the hands, MRSA can easily be spread from hand contact to the nose.

What special precautions are needed for MRSA while I'm in hospital?

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop MRSA from spreading to other patients in the hospital.

- You will be placed in a private room.
- When staff are entering your room they will wear gloves, and sometimes they will also wear a gown.
- Your room and the equipment used in your room will be kept clean with a disinfectant.
- You must stay in your room at all times. Unless special permission has been granted. Please speak with a member of your healthcare team. If it is necessary for you to go

to another part of the hospital (for example to the x-ray department), you will be asked to clean your hands before leaving your room.

- You must clean your hands before you leave your room.

Can family members visit?

You can have visitors. They should speak to the nurse before visiting. Visitors do not have to wear gloves and gown unless they are helping a great deal with your care. Your visitors will be asked to clean their hands before and after they leave your room.

You need to clean your hands:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- Before taking your medication and eating
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wound
- When your hands are dirty (use soap and water)
- Before you leave your room

What do I need to know prior to being discharged from hospital?

When seeking medical attention, please inform the health care providers that you have MRSA. This will allow them to take the appropriate steps to avoid spreading the bacteria to others.

If you have any questions or if you would like more information, please ask your nurse or doctor to contact the Infection Prevention and Control Program. You may also contact the City of Ottawa Public Health Department.