

## What is MRSA? - Information for Parents of Children with MRSA colonisation or infection

### What is MRSA?

**MRSA stands for Meticillin (M) resistant (R) *Staphylococcus (S) aureus (A)*.**

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a common bacterium (germ) which can be found on the skin or in the nose of about a third of the population. Many normal healthy people have *Staphylococcus aureus* on their skin without causing them any harm. MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* which is resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics.

### What is the difference between colonisation and infection?

Clear distinction should be made between MRSA colonisation (i.e. symptomless carriage of MRSA) and MRSA infection.

#### **Colonisation;**

The presence of MRSA on the nose, skin or wounds without any evidence of infection.

#### **Infection;**

The presence of MRSA and clinical signs and symptoms of infection (e.g. temperature, redness and swelling) or MRSA that has been isolated from an internal sterile body site e.g. bone or joint.

### Who is at risk of developing infection or colonisation with MRSA?

If your child has been receiving health care either in hospital or in the community and/or has had antibiotics, he or she is more likely than others to become colonised with these bacteria. Infections may occur in vulnerable patients such as those with serious illness and undergoing operations and procedures.

### How is colonisation diagnosed?

Babies admitted to Special Care Baby Unit will be screened for MRSA on admission and then on a weekly basis by taking swabs from the inside of your child's nose, throat, umbilicus and wound. Samples are sent to the microbiology laboratory and a confirmed result is usually available within 72 hours.

Knowing about colonisation helps us to plan your child's care and also helps the hospital to control any possible spread of MRSA.

### What are the symptoms of MRSA?

When colonised people are carrying the bacteria in their nose, throat or gut, or on their skin, they do not show any symptoms.

If your child has a temperature, and or redness of a wound this may indicate an infection. The cause of these symptoms will be investigated.

## How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is usually spread from person to person, most commonly on hands. Sometimes they are carried by equipment. This is one of the reasons why hospitals have protocols for hand hygiene, cleaning and maintenance.

**We welcome you reminding any health care workers to wash their hands before and after attending to your child.**

## How is infection or colonisation treated?

If your child is colonised with MRSA, treatment is not normally required if they are under 28 days old. However every child's case will be discussed with your clinical team (your hospital doctor and nurse) and the Infection Prevention & Control Team. If your child requires treatment at home for MRSA carriage you will be advised how to do this prior to discharge.

In the event of an infection, most strains of MRSA can be treated with an antibiotic often given by infusion (into a vein). This will be decided by your child's doctor.

## How can the spread of MRSA and all other bacteria be prevented in hospital?

To reduce the chance of spreading any organisms between patient's hospital staff should wash their hands thoroughly before and after contact with every patient, a plastic apron and gloves should be used when providing direct care to your child. Parents and other visitors should also clean their hands thoroughly before and after visiting patients. Alcohol gel is provided for this purpose.

If your child is colonised with MRSA the area will be cleaned thoroughly on a regular basis during your child's stay and also after he or she has left hospital.

The presence of the bacteria will be recorded as an alert on your child's medical information. If your child is admitted again, he or she will be screened for MRSA. This information will also be passed on to your child's GP and other health care professionals involved in your child's care.

## How can the spread of MRSA and all other bacteria be prevented at home?

Once your child is back at home, normal hygiene is sufficient, including washing your hands before and after touching any wounds.

The nursing staff will be able to advise you about this. It is important to carry on as normal outside the hospital setting.

**We make every effort to ensure that colonisation or infection with MRSA will not interfere with your child's investigations or treatment.**

## Further information

MRSA is present in all hospitals throughout the UK. All NHS Trusts are required to report all MRSA bacteraemias (isolates of MRSA in blood cultures which indicate serious infection) to the Department of Health. This information is used to monitor the control of MRSA in hospitals and more details can be found at [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk) and enter MRSA into the search.

East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust policy for the control of MRSA is based on the latest UK

guidelines and efficient use of our local resources. The underlying aim is to protect the most vulnerable patients whilst ensuring basic infection control measures to prevent cross-infection of bacteria between all patients.

## Where can I get more information about MRSA?

- 1 The doctors and nurses caring for your child
- 2 The Infection Control Team:  
**Conquest Hospital**  
Tel: 0300 131 4500 ext 773305  
**Eastbourne District General Hospital**  
Tel: 0300 131 5407

## Important Information

The information in this leaflet is for guidance purposes only and is not provided to replace professional clinical advice from a qualified practitioner.

## Your Comments

We are always interested to hear your views about our leaflets. If you have any comments, please contact the Patient Experience Team – Tel: 0300 131 4731 (direct dial) or by email at: [esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.patientexperience@nhs.net)

## Hand Hygiene

In the interests of our patients the Trust is committed to maintaining a clean, safe environment. Hand hygiene is a very important factor in controlling infection. Alcohol gel is widely available throughout our hospitals at the patient bedside for staff to use and also at the entrance of each clinical area for visitors to clean their hands before and after entering.

## Other formats

If you require any of the Trust leaflets in alternative formats, such as large print or alternative languages, please contact the Equality and Human Rights Department.

**Tel: 0300 131 4434 Email: [esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net](mailto:esh-tr.AccessibleInformation@nhs.net)**

After reading this information are there any questions you would like to ask? Please list below and ask your nurse or doctor.

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## Reference

The following clinicians have been consulted and agreed this patient information:

Next review date: January 2022  
Responsible clinician/author: Tara Fisher - Infection Prevention and Control Nurse

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