

# MRSA General Advice

## Introduction

This information leaflet is about MRSA and it is intended to answer commonly asked questions.

There are further leaflets that deal with MRSA in

- Your Own Home and Daily Living
- Community Hospitals
- Day Surgery



## What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

## What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

*Staphylococcus aureus* (staph aureus) is a common type of bacterium (germ) that can cause infection. The bacteria live harmlessly on the skin and in the nose of about one third of healthy people. This is called colonisation or carriage.

## What is resistance?

Antibiotics are drugs that are used to kill bacteria. Some *Staphylococcus aureus* are resistant to methicillin (a type of penicillin) and some of the other antibiotics that are used to treat *Staphylococcus* infections. Infection caused by MRSA may be treatable but there are fewer antibiotics that can be used.

## How is MRSA passed on?

It is mainly passed on by contact, most often by hands. It can be caught almost anywhere, so it is wrong to think of MRSA just as a 'hospital superbug'.

## How serious is MRSA?

Some people have the bacteria on their skin, but are well, (known as carriage or colonisation). However, an infection may occur when the bacteria gets into the body tissue and bloodstream and multiplies (known as infection). This can cause a person to feel unwell and possibly need treatment.

## If I have MRSA will people other than healthcare staff know?

No, not unless they need to know and you tell them.

## What can an individual do to help prevent the spread of MRSA?

- Wash and dry hands
  - after visiting the toilet
  - before and after eating
  - before and after touching wounds or catheters
- Shower or bathe
- Keep the environment tidy and uncluttered, making it easier to clean and keep dust free

## Does MRSA ever go away?

Once colonised or infected with MRSA, a person will always be considered as being a carrier of MRSA within the healthcare setting. This is because MRSA never completely leaves the body, but can continue to live harmlessly on it. This will not affect you in your home or in your day-to-day living.

## What if I have any more questions?

Ask the person who has given you this leaflet. If he or she is unable to answer your question please contact a nurse from the Leicestershire County and Rutland Infection Prevention and Control Team:

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**Everyone can play a part in reducing the spread of infections**