

How are staph and MRSA spread?

Staph bacteria and MRSA can spread among people having close contact with infected people. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact, and not through the air. Spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (i.e., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, sports equipment) contaminated by the infected skin of a person with MRSA or staph bacteria.

What is being done to minimise the risk of MRSA in Glasgow

There is an enormous amount being done to minimise any patient coming into hospital acquiring an infection. A leaflet which explains this is available from the NHS Greater Glasgow Health Issues web page.

I am coming into hospital and I am scared of getting MRSA?

Resistant organisms have been identified for longer than antibiotics have been in use. It is because we need and use antibiotics that MRSA has evolved to become a problem in hospitals. However to help you weigh up the small risk of acquiring MRSA in hospital consider the following:

- There is a small risk of acquiring an infection after any operation or invasive procedure, but infection, even with MRSA is treatable.
- Healthcare workers work in hospital and frequently care for patients who have MRSA, only extremely rarely have any of these workers developed an MRSA infection.
- Doctors would not recommend surgery if the risk from performing the surgery was significant.
- The risk of delaying surgery could be more life-threatening than any risk from infection.

How can I minimise the risk of staph or MRSA infections in hospital?

Follow the instructions from your healthcare workers

- Do not share bed linen, pillows or blankets with other patients.
- Do not alter any wound dressings unless instructed to do so.
- If you feel any pain or discomfort or there is redness around any wound or invasive device such as a IV, ask the nurse to come and inspect it.
- If you have any concerns regarding the ward, report them to the nursing staff.
- Always wash your hands after visiting the toilet.

This leaflet is based on the MRSA Fact Sheet produced by the Centres for Disease Control in Atlanta Georgia.

MRSA

SOME FACTS



This leaflet is written to provide information to anyone who may be going to use the health service in Glasgow or who just wishes to know more about Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* – MRSA.

MRSA THE FACTS

What is Staphylococcus aureus?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to simply as "staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Occasionally, staph can cause an infection; staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the world. Most of these infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and most can be treated without antibiotics. However, staph bacteria can also cause serious infections (such as surgical wound infections and pneumonia). In the past, most serious staph bacteria infections were treated with a certain type of antibiotic related to penicillin. Over the past 50 years, treatment of these infections has become more difficult because staph bacteria have become resistant to various antibiotics, including the commonly used penicillin-related antibiotics. These resistant bacteria are called methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA.

Where are staph and MRSA found?

Staph bacteria and MRSA can be found on the skin and in the nose of some people without causing illness.

What is the difference between colonisation and infection?

Colonisation occurs when the staph bacteria are present on or in the body without causing illness. Approximately 25 to 30% of the population is colonised in the nose with staph bacteria at a given time.

Infection occurs when the staph bacteria cause disease in the person. People also may be colonised or infected with MRSA, the staph bacteria that are resistant to many antibiotics.

What types of infections do Staph bacteria cause?

Staph bacteria can cause different kinds of illness, including skin infections, bone infections, pneumonia, severe life-threatening bloodstream infections, and others. Since MRSA is a staph bacterium, it can cause the same kinds of infection as staph in general; however, MRSA occurs more commonly among persons in hospitals.

Who gets MRSA?

MRSA infection usually develops in hospitalised patients who are elderly or very sick or who have an open wound or a tube going into their body (such as a urinary catheter or intravenous [IV] catheter). Any staph infection, including MRSA infections, acquired in hospitals can be severe. In addition, certain factors can put some patients at higher risk for MRSA including prolonged hospital stay, receiving antibiotics, being hospitalised in an intensive care or burn unit, having recent surgery, or carrying MRSA in the nose without developing illness.

MRSA causes illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities as well. Cases of MRSA diseases in the community have been associated with recent antibiotic use, sharing contaminated items, having active skin diseases, and living in crowded settings.

How common is staph and MRSA?

Approximately 25 to 30% of the population is colonised in the nose with staph bacteria at a given time. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infection in the UK, and are a common cause of pneumonia and bloodstream infections. The numbers who are colonised with MRSA at any one time is not known. Not all MRSA infections are routinely reported, so a precise number is not known. Health Protection Scotland (HPS) reports that MRSA is isolated from about 13,000 new persons per year in Scotland. Not all of these persons will have infection. The problem of community acquired MRSA is thought to be very small. Whenever MRSA is isolated from blood, it is reported to the HPS in Scotland. The MRSA's are often sent to the Scottish MRSA reference laboratory who work on them to try to identify new strains and what strains are causing problems in hospital and the community in Scotland.

Are staph and MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most staph bacteria and MRSA are susceptible to several antibiotics. Furthermore, most staph skin infections can be treated without antibiotics by draining the sore. However, if antibiotics are prescribed, patients should complete the full course and call their doctors if the infection does not get better. Patients who are only colonised with staph bacteria or MRSA usually do not need treatment.