

**This leaflet gives general advice. For further information please ask either the nursing or medical staff who are providing your care and treatment or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Team on 01386 502552.**

If you would like this leaflet in a different language, larger print size, in audio, Braille or any other format please contact the

PALS team by phone on

☎ 01905 760020;

by letter ✉ Communications,  
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**Worcestershire  
Health and Care**  
NHS Trust



## **MRSA**

**Meticillin Resistant  
*Staphylococcus  
aureus***

***What is it?***

***Your questions answered***

**An Information Leaflet  
for  
Patients and Staff**

## WHAT IS IT?

*Staphylococcus aureus* are bacteria that are found on the skin, in the nose and throat of about a third of the population. They usually present no problems at all.

This bacteria is the most common cause of simple, uncomplicated skin and wound infections. Occasionally, it may be responsible for more serious infections and those most at risk are hospital patients undergoing major surgery or those who require intensive care.

MRSA is a strain of *Staphylococcus aureus* which has become resistant to commonly used antibiotics. It should be noted that the infections caused by MRSA are usually no different or more dangerous than those caused by ordinary strains. However, the media will have you believe it is some sort of “super-bug”.

## HOW DID I GET MRSA?

It is usually passed on by human contact but you may have had it on your skin anyway. MRSA can be found in the environment as well as on other people. More commonly it is spread on hands, if hands come into contact with MRSA and are not washed thoroughly before touching someone else the germs can “hitch a ride” to the next person.

## HOW DO YOU KNOW I HAVE MRSA?

A specimen – perhaps a wound swab or a urine sample will have been sent to the laboratory either for routine testing or because staff were concerned that there may be an infection present.

## HOW LONG HAVE I HAD MRSA?

We do not know – it could be a few days or weeks or even longer.

## HOW WILL MRSA AFFECT ME?

Possibly not at all. You may not notice any physical difference at all as it may just be present on your skin. In some people it may cause infections and delay healing.

## WHY IS MRSA A PROBLEM?

In hospitals where many people are seriously ill they may be too weak to fight infection. It is vital that we make every effort to stop the spread of MRSA to such people.

## IS MRSA A PROBLEM FOR MY FAMILY AND FRIENDS?

No. MRSA does not normally effect healthy people. If you are worried you can always talk to the staff looking after you.

## HOW IS MRSA TREATED?

Usually with creams, powders and sometimes antibiotics. MRSA in the nose is treated with ointment. Wounds can be treated with ointment or dressings. Sometimes a special liquid soap is provided for people to wash with. They should make sure that they wet their skin prior to applying this to avoid irritation. Powder may also be recommended for use after washing. All these treatments are usually prescribed by a doctor. The whole course of treatment must be completed.

## WILL THE TREATMENT OF MY ORIGINAL CONDITION BE AFFECTED?

It is most unlikely, but if you are worried you should discuss this with your doctor.

## HOW WILL I KNOW THAT IT HAS GONE?

The only way that you can be sure that it is gone is to have further swabs carried out. However, if the infection is better it can usually be assumed that MRSA is no longer a problem.

