

MRSA Information for Patients and Families

What is Staphylococcus aureus (S. aureus)?

S. aureus, often simply called "staph," is a germ, often found on the skin of healthy people.

Sometimes, staph can get into the body and cause an infection.

This infection can be minor (such as pimples or boils) or serious (such as blood infection or pneumonia).

What is MRSA?

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant *S. aureus*) is a kind of *S. aureus* germ that can not be treated by some antibiotics often used to treat staph infections.

What is the difference between MRSA colonization and infection?

Colonization means that MRSA is living on or in the body without causing illness.

Infection means that MRSA is making the person sick.

Who gets MRSA?

Anyone can get MRSA but especially people who have been in the hospital or a nursing home for a long time, have an open wound, have a tube (such as a urine drainage tube, or feeding tube) going into the body, are sick with a long term illness, or have taken many antibiotics are more likely to get MRSA. Also, people in the community can get MRSA usually those with close contact to those with MRSA.

Healthy people rarely get MRSA infections (but they may).

How does the doctor know that someone has MRSA?

A doctor or nurse may take a culture to see if MRSA is present.

The culture is taken by rubbing a cotton swab or sending a sample of urine, sputum, wound drainage, or blood.

The test results are ready in two or three days.

Can MRSA be treated?

Yes.

Different antibiotics can still cure MRSA infections.

Patients who are only colonized with MRSA often do not need treatment.

Can MRSA spread?

Yes, MRSA is almost always **spread by touching**, often by hands contaminated with MRSA, and NOT through the air. John Dempsey Hospital takes special steps to prevent the spread of MRSA from patient to patient by practicing frequent hand washing and to separate, or isolate, patients with MRSA infections from other patients when appropriate.

What happens for all patients in John Dempsey Hospital?

- Health care workers will put on gloves and a gown (and sometimes a mask) before going into the patient's room.
- Health care workers must remove the gloves before leaving the room
- Health care workers must wash their hands with soap and water or waterless hand cleaner, before leaving the room. A squirt is all you need to cleanse your hands.

What happens when a patient with MRSA is isolated? In addition to above precautions.....

- The patient is placed in a room with a patient with a similar diagnosis and treated with strict contact precautions.
- Health care workers will put on gloves and sometimes a gown and mask before providing direct patient contact.
- Health care workers must remove the gloves, and gowns (and masks) before leaving the room
- Health care workers must wash their hands with soap and water or waterless hand cleaner before leaving the room. A squirt is all you need to cleanse your hands.

What about visitors?

- Visitors should wash hands frequently with soap and water or waterless hand cleaner (as long as hands are not visibly soiled).
- If Families or Visitors are involved in direct patient care they should wear gloves and gowns and remove them before leaving the room. Remember to always wash your hands thoroughly after taking off gloves and gowns!!
 - Most families should not bring children or infants into the room of a MRSA patient, because it is hard for children to follow hospital isolation rules.

Should the person with MRSA be isolated at home?

If a person is colonized with MRSA, isolation is rarely needed.

Most people can return to their daily routine. Good hand washing is most important.

If you have further questions

Please speak with the patient's nurse or physician or ask to speak Nancy Dupont, the Infection Control Specialist