



MRSA

(Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus):

A patient's guide

MRSA is a type of bacteria that usually lives harmlessly on the skin. But if it gets inside the body, it can cause a serious infection that needs immediate treatment with antibiotics.

Symptoms of MRSA

Most people with MRSA bacteria on their skin do not have any symptoms.

But if you get an MRSA infection under your skin, you may have an area of skin that:

- is painful and swollen
- feels warm when you touch it
- leaks pus or liquid
- looks red – though this may be harder to see on brown or black skin

If the infection spreads to your blood or lungs, or another part of your body, symptoms may include:

- high temperature
- difficulty breathing
- chills
- dizziness
- confusion

Treatments for MRSA

MRSA can be treated with antibiotics.

Antibiotic tablets can be used for mild MRSA infections.

More serious infections may need to be treated in hospital with antibiotics given by injection or a drip into a vein in your arm.



You may need antibiotics for a few days or up to a few months, depending on how serious the infection is.

If you get complications, you may need further treatment, such as surgery to drain a build-up of pus (abscess).

Preventing MRSA infections

People staying in care homes and hospitals (especially those having surgery) are at a higher risk of getting an MRSA infection.

If you're visiting someone in a care home or hospital, follow any instructions you're given about washing or sanitising your hands.

Testing for MRSA before going into hospital

If you're due to have surgery, you may be offered a screening test for MRSA before you go into hospital.

This usually involves wiping swabs (similar to cotton buds) on:

- the inside of your nostril
- the back of your mouth
- your groin

The swabs are then sent for testing.

If the result shows you have MRSA on your skin, you'll need to treat it with a special nasal cream, body wash and shampoo for 5 days.

You will be sent these items along with instructions on how to use them.

Causes of MRSA infection

MRSA usually lives harmlessly on the skin and mainly spreads through touch.

This can happen if you touch a person with MRSA, or something they've touched.

MRSA will only cause an infection if it spreads inside the body.

MRSA infections can affect anyone, but you may be more at risk if you:

- have long stays in hospital (especially if you're being treated for a serious condition)



- have a break or opening in your skin, for example for a drip into a vein, a cut from surgery, a serious burn or wound, or other damage to your skin
- have a weakened immune system (for example, because of a condition such as HIV or treatment such as chemotherapy)

Any further questions?

- If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact the Infection Control team, on 020 7288 3679, or you can ask the ward manager to contact us.
- Additional information can be found on NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/

The information in this leaflet has been sourced from <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mrsa/>

Patient advice and liaison service (PALS)

If you have a compliment, complaint or concern please contact our PALS team on 020 7288 5551 or whh-tr.PALS@nhs.net

If you need a large print, audio or translated copy of this leaflet please email whh-tr.patient-information@nhs.net. We will try our best to meet your needs.

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