

# MRSA screening

## Information for patients

In Scotland, hospitals that treat emergency patients and carry out operations are introducing MRSA (meticillin resistant staphylococcus aureus) screening. Screening is just one of the ways we are continuing to tackle infections such as MRSA in hospitals. This leaflet will give you some more information on MRSA screening and what it means to you. Your hospital can also give you more information about MRSA. Please ask your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.



## What is MRSA?

MRSA is a common bacterium. It stands for methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is a common type of bacterium that can live on your skin and not cause you harm, but can sometimes cause a number of common infections. Usually, having staphylococcus aureus in your nose or on your skin will not harm you, as the bacterium is not normally a risk to healthy people. People who carry it are not aware they do, and most of them will not have any symptoms. MRSA is a type of staphylococcus aureus that can no longer be treated by methicillin (a type of antibiotic), but we can treat it by using a body wash and a cream for your nose. It is estimated that around 5% of all patients who are admitted to hospital have the MRSA bacterium on their skin or in their nose already, even though they may feel well.

## How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is mainly spread from person to person through hand contact. This is why washing your hands and using alcohol-based hand gels are so important. Good hand hygiene is one of the most important and effective ways of stopping the spread of MRSA.

## What is screening and why is it being done?

MRSA screening involves identifying and testing patients who are admitted to this hospital so we can see who is already carrying the bacterium. The MRSA bacterium is more likely to cause an infection in people who are unwell, which is why it's so important to identify people in a hospital who have MRSA on their body before it can cause them harm or spread to others. If we can identify those patients who have MRSA on their body when they come into the hospital, we can make sure that they receive the best and most appropriate care.

## **Who do you test for MRSA?**

If you stay overnight in hospital and are identified as at risk we will test you for MRSA.

## **How will you take my sample?**

A member of hospital staff will collect a sample by taking a swab from your nose and your perineum (the area between the anus and the genitals) using a cotton bud. This is usually painless and only slightly uncomfortable. We will respect your privacy and dignity at all times when we are taking these samples.

## **What happens if you find MRSA in my sample?**

We can treat MRSA. Treatment is not always appropriate for everyone. Your doctor will discuss the most appropriate care with you. Please speak to your doctor or nurse if you are worried about any part of your treatment. If you have MRSA, we will usually care for you separately from other patients.

## **Where can I get more information?**

If you have any questions about MRSA screening, please ask a member of staff. For more general information about MRSA please visit [www.hps.scot.nhs.uk](http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk).

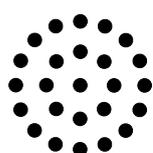
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3rd Floor, Meridian Court  
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0141 300 1100

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<http://www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/haic/sshaip/mrsascreeningpathfinderpublic.aspx>



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