

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus Aureas (*MRSA*) infection is caused by a variant form of the common Staph (*Staphylococcus*) bacteria. The Staph bacterium lives on the skin and in the noses of many people. This does not normally cause a problem. A problem only occurs when the bacteria enters the body through a cut or wound. The antibiotics normally used to kill Staph bacteria are not effective at killing *MRSA*. There are only a few strong, expensive antibiotics that are effective against *MRSA*.

If you have recently been diagnosed with *MRSA*, be sure to notify the health care staff that you are *MRSA* positive.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is most commonly spread from individuals through physical contact and contact with objects contaminated with infected bodily fluids. Cleaning your hands consistently is the number one way of preventing the spread of *MRSA*.

How is MRSA infection diagnosed?

A sample is taken using a swab from the infected area. Once the sample is taken, the organism is then given time to grow in a laboratory. The organism is then tested to determine which antibiotics may be effective to treat the infection.

How is MRSA treated?

If *MRSA* is detected early, it can usually be treated effectively with antibiotics other than methicillin. It is important that individuals who think they might have an *MRSA* infection seek advice from a health professional quickly, so that the infection can be properly diagnosed and treated effectively. Early diagnosis also ensures that appropriate measures can be taken to limit the spread of the infection. If left untreated, *MRSA* infections may develop into serious, life-threatening complications such as infection of the bloodstream, bones and/or lungs (e.g., pneumonia).

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What special precautions are required for MRSA?

Hand washing with soap and water is important during an MRSA infection and is one of the best defences against spread to another individual.

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop *MRSA* from spreading to other clients, staff and visitors at Casey House. If diagnosed with *MRSA*:

- An orange contact-enhanced precaution sign will be placed on the door of your room which indicates to health care workers, visitors or family of the need to wear special personal protective equipment when inside your room.
- You will be instructed to wear a fresh gown and gloves when outside your room to decrease the risk of transmission to other clients, staff and visitors.
- Your activities outside your room may be restricted (ie. Recreational activities) because *MRSA* can spread easily in hospital. This helps us protect other clients, staff and visitors.
- Avoid touching any open sores, and if you do, wash your hands immediately.

- You cannot share any personal items including towels, washcloths, razors, soap, creams, lotions, cosmetics, toothbrushes, nail files, combs and brushes.
- Equipment used in your daily care will remain in your room (e.g. stethoscope, thermometer)
- A laundry hamper will be left in your room for linen and your own clothes.
- Disposable plastic cutlery, plates and cups will be used and should be discarded in your room garbage.
- You are requested to limit the number of personal items from home you introduce into your room.
- Everyone must wash their hands when leaving your room with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer.

Good hand hygiene practices

You will be taught how to clean your hands with soap and water and with an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Important times you need to clean your hands are:

- After using the bathroom or assisting someone to use the toilet
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing
- Before you prepare food
- After touching / petting pets or animals
- Before eating and drinking
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- After handling dirty laundry
- Before you leave your room

Health care workers, visitors, family and friends must wash their hands when they enter and when they leave your room. Do not be shy about reminding everyone to wash his or her hands.

Clean hands are everyone's responsibility.

What about family/visitors?

- Upon arrival at Casey House, your visitors, family and friends need to check in with the clinical staff at the second floor staff work station.
- Your family and visitors will be required to wear a disposable long-sleeved yellow gown and gloves and possibly a mask while in your room.
- Your family and visitors will need to dispose of their gown and gloves in the garbage container provided in your room; they must avoid touching anything and must wash their hands upon exiting your room using an alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Family and visitors should not assist other patients with their care as they may inadvertently transfer *MRSA* to another client.
- Everyone must wash their hands when leaving your room using an alcohol based hand sanitizer soap and water.
- Consider delaying in-person visits from vulnerable or at-risk people who may be susceptible to an *MRSA* infection.

What will happen when I leave Casey House?

- Casey House will make every effort to resolve the issue before you leave, but many people with a *MRSA* infection are able to cope and heal in their home and community.
- If you go to another health care facility or if you have continued care services in your home, some precautions might be needed. This is to prevent your caregivers from picking up the bacteria and spreading it to others.
- You can return to your normal routine as your symptoms and recovery permit.
- Take all medications and treatments as prescribed by your doctor and pharmacist until the last dose is finished.
- Good hand washing is very important to reduce the risk of spreading *MRSA*.
- You can carry on with your usual activities and remind everyone to wash their hands often. You should wash your hands after you go to the bathroom or touch your nose or a wound as a matter of routine, not just for *MRSA*.

AT HOME:

What is the proper way to clean?

MRSA can live on surfaces for days, weeks, or even months. When cleaning:

- The person living with *MRSA* should use a single chair or area for sitting that only they use until the infection is healed. A hard surface or one easily cleaned with disinfectant should be chosen.
- Pay special attention to items that are frequently touched items including: light switches, door knobs, phones, toilets, sinks, tubs, kitchen counters, cell phones, pagers, computer keyboards, etc.
- Wipe the surface or object/ chair with a phenol-containing disinfecting product or a mix of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water (using a fresh mix each day you clean).
- Use a phenol-containing spray to disinfect any cloth or upholstered surface.
- Clean utensils and dishes in the usual manner with soap and hot water or a standard dishwasher.

If you have a wound or dressing and if body fluids or pus gets onto surfaces, you need to follow these steps:

1. Put on disposable gloves.
2. Wipe up the fluids with a paper towel.
3. Throw the paper towel in a plastic bag-lined trashcan.
4. Clean the surface thoroughly with soap and water and a paper towel.
5. Throw the paper towel in the plastic bag-lined trash can.
6. Then wipe the surface again with phenol-containing disinfecting product or a mix of 1 tablespoon bleach to 1 quart of water (using a fresh mix each day), and let it dry for at least 30 seconds.
7. Throw the paper towel in the plastic bag-lined trashcan.
8. Remove the gloves, and throw them in the trash.
9. Tie the trash bag containing the *MRSA* contaminated items closed and dispose of in the regular garbage.
10. Wash your hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer.

What is the proper way to wash my clothes?

MRSA can spread from soiled clothes and bedding. When doing laundry, you will want to follow some precautions:

- Change towels and linens daily.
- Have a separate laundry hamper for all clothing and household linen that comes in contact with the MRSA house member. The laundry hamper must be made of a material that is impervious to fluids (e.g., solid plastic container, NOT one with ventilation holes or made of canvas or wicker).
- Wear disposable gloves to handle laundry that is soiled with body fluids, like drainage from a sore, urine, or feces.
- When collecting dirty laundry, hold it away from your body to prevent getting bacteria on your clothes, preferably in a plastic bag or container.
- Wash the clothing of the person with MRSA separate from the other laundry to prevent the bacteria from getting on other household member's clothing or household linen.
- Put the laundry in the washer immediately, or store it in a plastic bag until it can be washed.
- Wash with hot water and regular detergent; use bleach when possible.
- Dry on the hot setting, and make sure clothes are completely dry.
- Throw gloves away after taking them off, and do not reuse them.
- Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer, even if you have been wearing gloves.