



MRSA PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

MRSA Informational Video Available for Inpatients 24 hours a day
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One of your tests (cultures) show that you are carrying **MRSA (*methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus*)**. This is also known as being "MRSA positive." Staff must now take special precautions when taking care of you. This information sheet may help you & your family to understand the procedures more clearly.

WHAT IS AN ANTIBIOTIC RESISTANT GERM?

Antibiotics are medicines that are used to kill the germs (bacteria) that cause infections. An antibiotic resistant germ is not killed by the usual antibiotics. If an antibiotic resistant germ causes an infection, then a stronger drug must be used.

WHAT IS MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a kind of bacteria (germ) that lives on human skin and it can also live in the nose. An antibiotic that has been used to treat infections caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* is called methicillin. Some types of *Staphylococcus aureus* are not killed by methicillin and are said to be "Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*" (MRSA).

CAN IT BE HARMFUL?

Staphylococcus aureus (*S. aureus*) is a normal germ that usually does not harm people and is needed to keep people healthy. In a hospital, if the germ gets into a wound or in the blood of a sick person, it can cause an infection. You can also be "colonized" with MRSA. This means that MRSA is living on your skin or inside your body, but is not causing an illness or infection.

HOW DID I GET MRSA?

The main way you can get MRSA is by having it spread to you from someone colonized or infected with MRSA. This might be by direct touch (contact) with a person, or contact with things or surfaces in the room, such as bedrails, telephones, or other equipment that has MRSA on it. You are more likely to get MRSA if you have been very ill, have been in a hospital or nursing home, or have been on many antibiotics. Careful hand washing is the most important way to keep from spreading MRSA to other patients. That is why all hospital staff, patients, and visitors must wash their hands and follow special precautions.

WHY ARE SPECIAL PRECAUTIONS NEEDED?

Special precautions are needed in order to prevent the spread of this organism to other patients in the hospital who are also ill and therefore more likely to develop an infection. At the University of Virginia Health System (UVa), patients with MRSA will be placed on Contact Precautions, also known as Contact Isolation. Patients will be placed in a private room or in a room with a patient with the same organism(s).

WHAT WILL BE DIFFERENT?

- You will be asked to stay in your hospital room as much as possible. When you leave the room, wash your hands well (with soap and water or hand gel) and wear a cover gown. If you have open sores on your hands, you should wear gloves, too. If you have a cough or cold, you may be asked to wear a mask. You may walk in the main East-West hallway. You should NOT walk up and down the unit hallway, visit other patient rooms, or go to the common areas such as the cafeteria, dayroom, gift shop or nurses station.

- Signs will be placed outside the room to remind everyone about the special precautions.
- People who are taking care of you will wear gowns and gloves to prevent them from picking up the MRSA and taking it to other patients.
- Visitors must also follow isolation precautions to minimize spread within the environment.
- It is very important for all staff and visitors to wash their hands when they come in and when they leave your room.
- Please wash your hands carefully after going to the bathroom and before eating.

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY AND VISITORS?

You may still have visitors. They must wash their hands when they come in and when they leave. They must put on gowns and gloves too.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN WHEN I LEAVE THE HOSPITAL?

If you go to another hospital or nursing home or if you go to a doctor's office, clinic, dentist or have visits from home health, some precautions may still be taken. This is to prevent your care givers from picking up the germ and spreading it to other patients. Good hand washing is very important to reduce the risk of spread.

WHAT ABOUT AT HOME?

Once you leave the hospital and go home, you can return to your normal routine including going out in public because many activities in the community involve less risk for transmission and because the risk of MRSA infection is low in healthy adults and children. No special cleaning of laundry or dishes is needed.

Remind everyone to wash their hands often. You should wash your hands before you eat, after you go to the bathroom, touch your nose or touch a wound. If anyone is sick at home, you should check with their doctor to see if any special precautions are needed to protect them from MRSA.

WILL THIS GO AWAY?

It might go away on its own, but there are medicines which can help "clear" (get rid of) MRSA from the body more quickly. You may want to ask your doctors about this treatment.

HOW CAN I HELP?

If you need care from a doctor, hospital, home health provider, therapist, or other caregiver, please tell them you are MRSA positive. They may choose to use special precautions when caring for you as well.

WHAT IF I AM ADMITTED TO THE HOSPITAL AGAIN?

Whenever you are admitted to UVA hospital, if you still have MRSA, you will be placed in a single room (or a room with another patient with MRSA), and you will be cared for with Contact Precautions. Follow-up tests (cultures) may be done to check if the MRSA is still present.

HOW DO I GET OFF ISOLATION?

Before stopping isolation, Infection Prevention & Control will arrange for you to have 3 sets of tests (cultures) to show that the MRSA is gone. Follow-up tests at UVA may be done in several months, sooner if you have had the specific treatment to clear MRSA. You must be off all antibiotics for at least three days before culturing can be done. If you are in the hospital after you are cleared, you will be checked regularly to make sure you still do not have MRSA.

If you are out of the hospital and want to be tested, or have any questions, please call UVA Infection Prevention & Control at (434) 924-0260 and ask for the Outpatient Infection Control Nurse.

WASH YOUR HANDS OFTEN AND WELL