

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. We ask that you, and anyone visiting you, use the hand sanitiser available at the entrance to every ward before coming in to and after leaving the ward. In some situations hands may need to be washed at the sink using soap and water rather than using the hand sanitiser as hand sanitisers are not suitable for use when dealing with patients who have symptoms of diarrhoea.

For infection prevention & control purposes and to keep you safe and well visitors are requested **not** to:

- Visit you if they are unwell
- Sit on your bed or use the patient toilets.
- Touch your wounds, or any medical devices, drips or catheters.

How can I find out more?

Contact the Infection Prevention & Control Department on:

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Tel: 01296 315337

Public Health England Tel: 0344 225 3861 (option 4, option 1)

NHS Choices Website: <http://www.nhs.uk/pages/home.aspx>

www.buckshealthcare.nhs.uk

Follow us on Twitter @buckshealthcare

MRSA

Information Leaflet for Visitors & General Public

If you require a translation or alternative format of this leaflet please call
Infection Prevention & Control 01296 315337

What is MRSA? (Meticillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

Staphylococcus aureus is a very common bacterium (germ) that around 30% of the population carry on their skin or in their nose without knowing it. Usually this bacterium is harmless. Sometimes though, it can cause skin infections such as boils. These infections are normally mild and are easily treated.

Some strains of the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacterium have developed a degree of resistance to the more commonly used antibiotics (e.g. Penicillin), and are called MRSA (Meticillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*).

It is this resistance to certain (not all) antibiotics that makes MRSA different, as it may not be as easy to treat if it does cause an infection.

People can carry MRSA in the same way as the usual *Staphylococcus aureus* without causing harm to themselves or others.

MRSA can affect people in hospital and in the community (own home, care homes) but does not usually cause a problem.

How will you know if you have it?

MRSA is only detected by a laboratory. This usually happens only when a wound or another area of the body becomes infected and it is identified, e.g. by a wound swab or urine specimen.

Testing for MRSA is sometimes carried out as part of a hospital screening policy. Certain people are more vulnerable to infection e.g. people with urinary catheters and those with surgical wounds – this is why extra precautions are taken in healthcare environments such as hospitals to prevent spread of MRSA.

How can you help prevent spread of MRSA?

MRSA can be spread by hands, so **hand washing is the most important way to stop it spreading**. Therefore we would ask you to help us provide a safe environment by using the hand sanitiser on entering and exiting the ward/department. Also to complete good hand hygiene practice by using the hand sanitiser/wash your hands if you carry out any 'hands on care' with your relative. You may also be asked to wear an apron in this situation.

It is particularly important that carers and healthcare workers wash and dry their hands thoroughly between caring for people.

Always wash hands:

- Between caring for clients/patients
- After using the toilet
- Before eating/preparing food
- After handling soiled linen/bedding/nappies
- After touching animals
- When hands appear dirty

Healthcare workers may use a hand sanitiser to assist in ensuring that their hands are properly clean and do not transfer MRSA between patients.

No special cleaning methods or products are required good general cleanliness is important in helping prevent the spread of infection generally.

Clothing and bedding do not generally need to be washed separately or differently.

Additional Information

Hospitals have policies and procedures in place to minimise the spread of MRSA. If your relative has MRSA they will be given an MRSA Patient Information Leaflet .

Friends and family are not at risk from MRSA, as it does not normally affect healthy people. To prevent spreading MRSA, they should wash their hands thoroughly at all times and ensure all cuts or abrasions on their hands are covered with waterproof dressings. This includes babies, children and pregnant women.

It is not necessary for visitors or carers to wear gloves if, for example, they are just talking to patients, but hands must be washed after all patient contact. In hospital you may be asked to wash your hands or use a hand sanitiser foam after assisting a patient and on entering and leaving a hospital ward.