

MRSA – a type of multi-resistant bacteria

In a test sample you provided, bacteria which are resistant to certain types of antibiotics, known as MRSA, have been found.

What is MRSA?

MRSA means meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) are bacteria which normally occur on the skin or mucous membranes in a high proportion of the population. Of the adult population, 80% are occasional carriers of *S. aureus* and around 20% are continuous carriers of the bacteria in their nose. It is common for people to be a carrier of these bacteria without becoming ill, but they can sometimes cause wound infections, abscesses or other more serious infections. However, the bacterial particularly “thrives” when the skin is damaged or if foreign matter is present, such as a urine catheter.

The difference between ordinary *S. aureus* and MRSA is that MRSA is resistant to certain types of antibiotics, which makes it harder to treat an infection with MRSA. If you are carrying MRSA, you will not be treated unless you are ill.

How are MRSA infections passed on?

MRSA carriers will rarely infect other people. However, the risk of infecting others rises if you have a wound, eczema or skin infection. We then say that you ‘have risk factors’. Having a catheter or stomy is also a risk factor. A lot of bacteria often accumulate in and around these areas.

Both ordinary staphylococci and MRSA can be spread in connection with the provision of care at a hospital, certain types of residential accommodation and other healthcare institutions. Infection can also spread in society.

MRSA is very common in the healthcare sector in many other countries. The risk of infection is therefore greater if you are receiving medical care abroad.

What should I be aware of as a carrier of MRSA?

You must always be very thorough with your hand hygiene.

Remember to use your own hand-towel and your own toiletries.

If you have a wound or eczema, you should avoid physical activity in public gyms, etc.

If you have any of the risk factors (wounds, eczema, urine catheter, stomy), you should remember to:

- Have a shower instead of a bath
- Cover any wounds with a bandage and replace any bandages if fluids seep through
- If you have a catheter, wear it under your clothing
- Always wash your hands after you have come into contact with a catheter or wounds

If you remember the above, you can interact with other people in the normal way.

Precautions in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act

MRSA is notifiable in accordance with the Communicable Diseases Act and you are obliged to follow the recommendations and precautions which your doctor asks you to follow and to attend appointments for samples to be taken which your doctor makes for you.

You must participate in contact tracing and disclose your MRSA infection when you receive medical care, dental care or medical foot care.

You should ideally wait before having piercing, tattooing, massage or other similar procedures until you are free from the risk factors.

Is it possible to get rid of MRSA?

Yes. If, over the course of a year, you have had at least three negative cultures and you are free from the risk factors, the doctor can discharge you from further checks and precautions. How long this will take depends very much on the individual.

Children at school or preschool

Children can attend preschool and take part in all activities provided they are free from the risk factors. Children who do have risk factors must generally stay at home. There is no obligation to inform the preschool's staff.

In the case of children at school, there are no restrictions except any individually specified precautions. In consultation with the treating doctor, an assessment will be made as to whether the school healthcare staff should be informed and, if so, who should inform them. Other staff at the school need not be informed.

The legal guardian is responsible for ensuring that the precautions are followed.

If you have any further questions after reading this information, contact the MRSA nurse at the Infection and Skin Clinic on tel. 0455 73 10 67.

