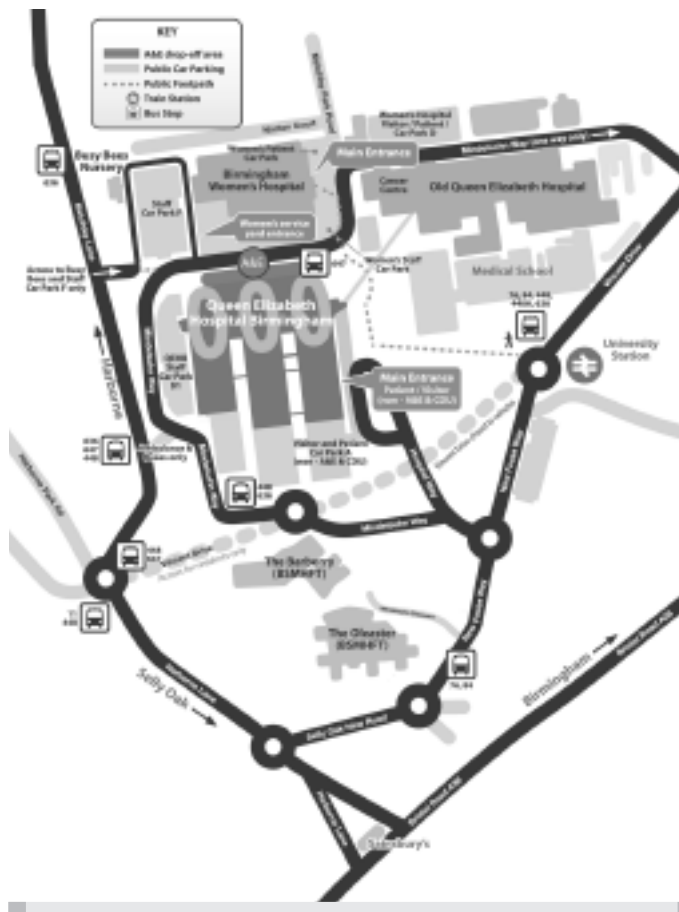


How can I find out more about MRSA?

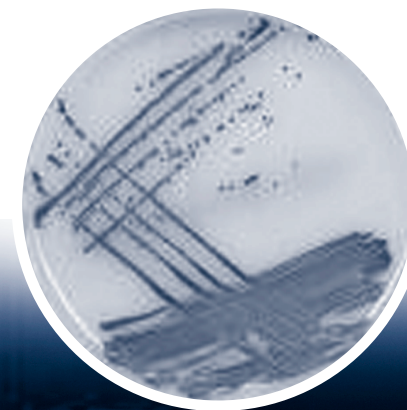
Your doctor, nurse or midwife may be able to answer any specific questions that you have. If they cannot help they will be able to ask someone from the hospital's specialist infection control staff.

The Health Protection Agency is a government agency that is responsible for infections, including MRSA. There is a lot of general information on their website www.hpa.org.uk, including answers to frequently asked questions and a fact sheet.

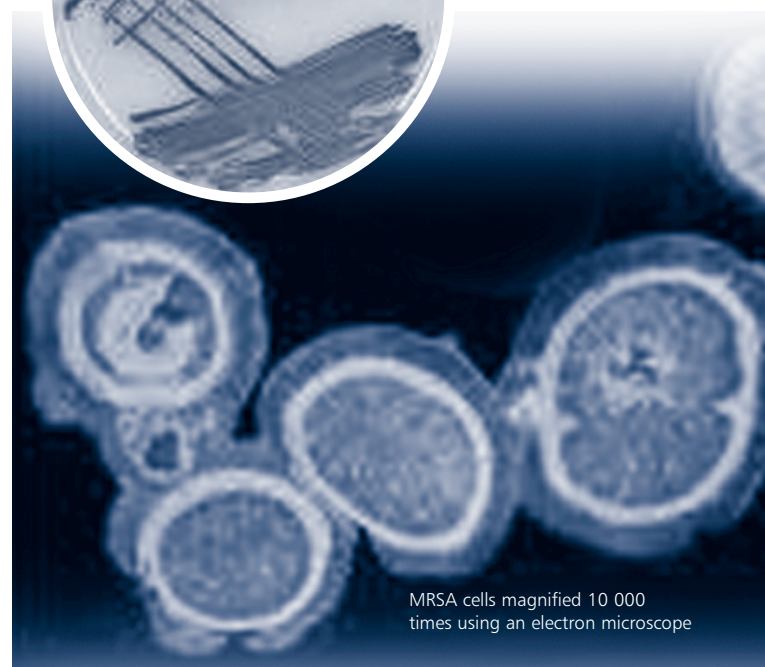


Birmingham Women's **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

What is MRSA?



MRSA growing in the laboratory



MRSA cells magnified 10 000 times using an electron microscope

Ref 163/01/2012 Review 01/2015

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Patient Information

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a common bacterium (germ) that is found on the skin or in the nostrils of about one in three healthy people. Healthy people who have the germ are said to be colonised. Calling someone 'colonised' means that they have the germ, but it is not doing them any harm. Someone who is made ill by *Staphylococcus aureus* is said to have an infection. Most infections are mild, such as boils or pimples. However *Staphylococcus aureus* can sometimes cause more serious problems such as wound infections, chest infections or bloodstream infections.

MRSA are types of *Staphylococcus aureus* that are resistant to an antibiotic called meticillin (a type of penicillin) and often to other antibiotics. Other than being more difficult to treat, MRSA is just like other type of *Staphylococcus aureus*. Thus most people with MRSA are colonised and have no symptoms. Some people will get infections, especially when they are in hospital and are more vulnerable than normal to getting infections.

How do people get MRSA?

MRSA is usually spread by touch. If a person gets MRSA on their hands, they can pass it to people and things that they touch. It may then be picked up and passed on to others.

How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

People who are colonised with MRSA do not look or feel different from anyone else. The only way of finding out whether someone is colonised with MRSA is to test a swab from their nose.

Patients who have an infection caused by MRSA will have symptoms of infection. They may have a high temperature, or their wound may be red, sore or oozing pus. Even then laboratory tests are needed to show that MRSA is the germ causing infection.

What happens when a patient in hospital has MRSA?

If you have MRSA it should not delay the treatment that is planned for you.

There are two important risks from having MRSA in hospital, but if we know that you have it we can do things to deal with these risks.

- Things that happen in hospital, like having an operation or giving birth, make patients at higher risk of infection. Therefore someone who is colonised with MRSA may go on to get an infection with the germ because they are more vulnerable. We will therefore give you treatment to try to get rid of your MRSA (the next section gives more details), and will also make sure that any antibiotics that you need will work against MRSA.

- MRSA can spread to other patients. We may therefore need to look after you in a single room, and we may need to take special precautions if you have to go to other parts of the hospital.

How is MRSA treated?

People who have MRSA can be treated. People who are colonised are usually given an antiseptic to wash with and a cream to use in their nose. If they have an infection they may need antibiotics.

Can MRSA harm family and friends?

MRSA does not usually harm healthy people. That includes elderly people, pregnant women, children and babies. However, MRSA can affect people who have certain health problems, especially skin conditions or open wounds. Ask us or your family doctor for advice if you are worried about spreading MRSA to a vulnerable friend or family member.

There is usually no risk to people visiting someone in hospital who has MRSA. If you are concerned you can ask a nurse, doctor or midwife. Visitors should make sure that they wash their hands thoroughly before they leave the ward, to help make sure that they don't take MRSA home with them.