

MRSA screening

MRSA screening is carried out routinely in our hospitals. This leaflet explains about the screening process.

MRSA stands for Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. This is a type of bacteria that has become resistant to many antibiotics. In healthy people MRSA is not harmful. However, it can be a problem in hospitals where people are recovering from operations and illness, and are more vulnerable to infections.

Who needs to be screened for MRSA?

Many people carry the MRSA bacteria harmlessly on their skin, without having any symptoms. Treatment with antiseptic soap and ointment may reduce the amount of MRSA bacteria you are carrying. This will reduce the risk of complications occurring after your operation or other treatment, and help prevent the spread of MRSA within the hospital. It is essential that those individuals with medical or surgical conditions and undergoing certain procedures are screened. Your GP or the outpatient/pre-admission nurse will determine if you need screening.

How is screening carried out?

Screening will usually take place at your outpatient/pre-admission appointment or on admission to hospital. Screening involves swabs (wiping with special cotton buds) being taken of the inside of your nose and either your throat or groin. These are sent to our laboratory for testing. Sometimes, it is necessary to ask you to carry out the test at home. If so, we will send the swabs to you along with an instruction sheet. A telephone number is included in case you have any problems. Please take the used swabs to your GP surgery, who will send them to our laboratory for testing.

What happens next?

If your swabs are 'MRSA positive', this means that MRSA bacteria were found. Please don't worry; it is likely that you are only 'carrying' MRSA. You may be given an antiseptic soap to wash your hair and skin, and ointment to apply to the inside of your nose. There will be instructions telling you how to use it and when to start (separate leaflet available).

If your swabs are 'MRSA negative', no MRSA bacteria were found at that time. **We will only contact you if you are found to be MRSA positive.** You may need to be screened again in the future, depending on your treatment. Your consultant will talk to you about this, if necessary.

Please speak to the nurse if you have any concerns or further questions.

If you would like this leaflet in large print, braille, audio version or in another language, please contact the General Office on 01872 252690