



During this admission, prior admission, or a follow-up visit to a hospital, you or your family member may have been in contact with a person who was found to have an uncommon germ called Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

---

Screening for resistant germs is an important part of the Infection Control Program to reduce the risk of spread of antibiotic germs to other clients.

**What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) is a bacteria or germ that normally lives on the skin or in the nose of many people. Usually, they are not aware of it and are completely healthy. This is called colonization. It is normal to be colonized with bacteria in many parts of our bodies. Is *S. aureus* gets “inside” the body, for example, under the skin or into the lungs, it can cause infections. When it does cause infection, it is usually treated with antibiotics.

**What does antibiotic resistance mean?**

Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by germs. Sometimes these drugs will no longer kill the germs and these germs are called antibiotic resistant.

**What is Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA?**

The antibiotic used to treat *S. aureus* is a drug called Methicillin. Some *S. aureus* are no longer killed by methicillin and they are called MRSA. When this happens a stronger antibiotic is needed to treat the infection. Individuals can have an infection caused by MRSA or they can just carry the germ on their skin or nose.

**Why is testing needed?**

Hospitals are places where germs may be passed from one patient to another. Testing is required to prevent the spread of this germ to other patients.

**How do we test for MRSA?**

One way to help us find this germ is to take swabs of your nose and wounds. Results are usually available within 72-96 hours. If you test positive, you will require special precautions for MRSA. The doctor will be notified if the test is positive for MRSA.



### Can family and friends get MRSA?

- ◆ The risk is very low.
- ◆ Healthy family members and friends may also carry this germ but not show any signs of infection.
- ◆ Family members should always wash their hands or use alcohol-based handrub (sanitizers) and follow directions from hospital staff, and on signs on client's door.
- ◆ If any family or visitor is concerned about MRSA, they should speak with staff or contact Infection Control.

The greatest concern is in the hospital setting where it is easy to spread MRSA to many patients.

### How can the person with MRSA help?

- ◆ Remind all health care workers and visitors to wash their hands or use an alcohol-based handrub (sanitizer) often.
  - ◆ The person who has MRSA should wash their hands well or use an alcohol-based handrub (sanitizer) often. When washing their hands, turn off the taps with a dry paper towel to avoid getting hands dirty again.
- 

*If you need more information:*

- ◆ *Call (204) 428-2738 or (204) 239-2211 or (204) 331-8800 and ask to speak to the Infection Control Practitioner.*

**Good hand washing or using alcohol-based handrub (sanitizer) is the best way to prevent the spread of these germs.**

### **REFERENCE:**

Manitoba Health. (2007). *Manitoba Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Antibiotic Resistant Organisms*. Manitoba Communicable Disease Control.