
Introduction

We take cleanliness, and infection prevention and control seriously. All staff receive regular training on infection prevention and control and should be able to answer any of your questions or concerns.

Many hospital infections can be avoided. To control hospital infections effectively we need the support and co-operation of patients and visitors as well as staff.

The Trust has a strategy in place to prevent healthcare associated infections such as MRSA to ensure the highest standard of hand hygiene and clinical practice. All our patients are screened for MRSA either before they are admitted to one of our hospitals or within 24 hours of their admission.

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus (SA) is a bacterium found on the skin and in the nose, which about one in three people carry without problems. Occasionally, this bug may enter the body and cause minor infections, such as spots and boils, or more serious complications, such as blood infection (septicaemia), infection of the skin or underlying tissues (cellulitis) or pneumonia. Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is used to describe

Staphylococcus aureus that is resistant to meticillin and other antibiotics which may be used to treat *Staphylococcus aureus* infections.

First identified in the 1960s, MRSA was generally only seen on hospital wards caring for very sick patients, such as intensive care units. Since then, however, it has become much more common worldwide and now also affects people in the wider community.

Why am I being screened for MRSA?

To ensure your and other patients' health and safety, we would like to find out if you might be carrying MRSA before you come into hospital. If the result is positive, we can use a simple treatment to eliminate as much of it as possible, so the chances of you getting an MRSA infection, or passing MRSA on to another patient, are much smaller.

When and where will I be screened for MRSA?

We will screen you before you come into hospital for your operation or treatment. This may be in a pre-admission assessment clinic, an outpatient clinic or sometimes at your GP surgery. Usually, a nurse will take the swabs as part of the other checks leading up to your hospital

stay, such as your blood pressure and blood test.

If you are admitted to hospital as an emergency patient, MRSA screening will be done within 24 hours of your admission.

You may also be screened if you attend the hospital regularly for other treatments.

How will I be screened for MRSA?

We can find out if you are carrying MRSA by taking a sample, using a swab, from your skin (generally the groin) and inside of your nose. A swab is like a cotton bud that is placed on the area to be tested. The test is painless and only takes a few seconds to complete.

When will I get the results?

Your swabs will be sent to a laboratory to be checked for MRSA. The results usually take between three and five days, but sometimes may be available sooner.

What happens after I have been screened?

If you are found to be carrying MRSA on your skin or in your nose, you will be informed by the hospital or your GP. Please do not worry – many people carry MRSA. It does not make you ill and you are not a risk to healthy people, including

the elderly, pregnant women, children and babies. A doctor or nurse will let you know what you need to do next. The treatment is simple and usually involves using a special body and hair wash, and a special cream in your nose.

If you are going to be in hospital for a prolonged period of time you may be screened for MRSA more regularly during your stay.

Further information

Please speak to your doctor or nurse in the first instance if you have any questions or concerns about MRSA or other aspects of your treatment.

For general infection prevention and control information, please contact the infection prevention and control team on 020 331 33271.

How do I make a comment about my treatment?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on

020 3312 7777 (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at

imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:

imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-Fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

MRSA Screening

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Infection Prevention and Control
Published: June 2023
Review date: June 2026
Reference no: 227T

© Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust