

What can I do to help?

In order to help prevent the spread of MRSA into the environment, please wash your hands especially after using the toilet.

You can ask the staff looking after you to wash their hands or use alcohol hand rub and wear an apron and gloves prior to performing any care.

What will happen when I go home?

At home, you will need to ensure you practise good hand washing.

If you are admitted to another hospital please let the staff caring for you know that you have had a positive MRSA result.

Also let your GP know.

How can I get more information?

The Infection Prevention and Control nurses visit each ward at least once per day; ask your nurse to contact us.

Alternatively, you can telephone the Infection Prevention and Control Team in the hospital on 4433 1181.

Contact details

Infection Prevention and Control

Townsville University Hospital
100 Angus Smith Drive
Douglas QLD 4814

Phone: (07) 4433 1181

Townsville Hospital and Health Service
100 Angus Smith Drive, Douglas QLD 4810

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Partnering with Consumers - This patient information brochure supports National Safety and Quality Health Service Standard 2. Consumers and/or carers provided feedback on this patient information.



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MRSA

Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus

A guide for patients and visitors of the
Townsville Hospital and Health Service



What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus are a common bacteria found in our environment and on the skin of many people. The bacteria do not cause problems unless they get inside the body. When this happens they can cause infections such as boils or wound infections. These infections can be treated with antibiotics in most cases.

Some strains of staphylococcus aureus have developed resistance to some antibiotics and these are known as methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus (MRSA).

There are two strains of MRSA which are causing problems across Australia.

1. Hospital-acquired MRSA – as a result of healthcare activities.
2. Community-acquired MRSA – acquired in our communities.

Both of these are difficult to treat and are easily transmitted from person to person.

What can MRSA cause?

MRSA can be carried on the skin and may cause no problems. There is a risk of infection if the bacteria enters the body.

MRSA can cause skin, urine and wound infections and can also lead to more serious lung infections (pneumonia) or infections in the blood (bacteraemia).

How is MRSA treated?

If you are a carrier of MRSA you will not need any treatment but you will need to be cared for in a way to prevent transmission of MRSA to other patients.

If you are having major surgery, your doctor may give you a special body wash and nasal cream to lessen your risk of infection with MRSA.

If MRSA is causing an infection you will be given a very strong antibiotic and you will need close monitoring by your doctor.

Who is at risk of infection?

People who are already ill and have been admitted to hospital are at risk. Patients with an impaired immune system through illness are more susceptible to infections.

How does MRSA spread?

It is spread by direct physical contact with an affected patient or their surroundings. This includes touching sheets, dressings, bedding and hospital equipment.

It is often spread by hands and that is why hand hygiene is so important.

It is OK for you to ask staff if they have washed their hands prior to touching you.

What will this mean for my hospital care?

All patients who have a positive result for MRSA are managed with special precautions to prevent the spread to other patients.

Ideally, you will be nursed in a single room and the staff will wear an apron and gloves to care for you.

An alert sign will be placed outside your door to inform all staff of the precautions required before giving you care.

You are still able to move outside your room, but please wash your hands. Avoid visiting other patients in hospital.

Your visitors only need to wash their hands before visiting you and when they leave unless they are visiting other patients in the hospital. In that case they should also wear an apron and gloves when visiting you.

MRSA does not usually pose a threat to healthy people, hospital staff, family members or your close contacts.

Community-acquired MRSA can be spread between people living together in the community. Paying attention to personal hygiene will help protect you from a variety of bacteria.