

## How you can help in hospital?

- Please tell your doctor or nurse if you are worried about MRSA or isolation.
- Please follow your isolation instructions by staying in your room and not visiting other patients.
- Wash your hands and pay attention to good hygiene, particularly when handling wounds or equipment used for your care.
- Follow your doctors instructions about taking antibiotics, showering with special soap or using antibiotic ointments if they have been prescribed.
- Ask your family/whanau and other visitors to wash their hands on leaving the room.
- Please tell your doctor or nurse that you have had MRSA if you:
  - go to a doctor, GP or Clinic
  - go to another hospital
  - return to Waikato Hospital.

This is important as it allows the doctor to give you the right treatment and to use precautions to ensure they do not pass on the bacteria to other patients.

# **MRSA**

## **Methicillin-resistant**

*Staphylococcus aureus*

## **Information for patients in hospital and their family/whanau**

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## **Infection Control Service**

## What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacteria or 'germ' that normally lives on the skin and usually causes no harm.

Some strains of this bacteria have developed resistance to a group of commonly-used antibiotics, which includes flucloxacillin and amoxicillin. This means that these antibiotics are unlikely to work against infections caused by MRSA.

Like Staphylococcus aureus MRSA may be present on the skin without causing harm, often referred to as **colonisation**. If it gets into a wound or break in the skin, it can cause an **infection**. There are still a number of other antibiotic groups we can use to treat MRSA.

## How does this affect you?

One of your tests shows that the MRSA bacteria are present. Hospital policy is that special precautions now need to be taken and you will need to be isolated to minimise the risk of spread of the bacteria to other patients in the hospital. This is important because patients in hospital are more vulnerable to infection with MRSA than in the community.

## What does isolation mean?

Isolation precautions are as follows:

1. You will be given a single room to minimise contact with other patients.
2. Staff may wear gloves, aprons/gowns and masks while caring for you to prevent them carrying the bacteria to other patients they look after.
3. **Everyone entering and leaving the room must wash their hands or use the alcohol handgel provided.** MRSA is primarily spread via the hands of healthcare workers from one patient to another.
4. An isolation instruction card will be on the door of your room. This card does not say what the bacteria is or what illness you have so privacy is maintained but does give instructions on what staff must do.
5. You may be given special soap to shower with. This helps to reduce the number of MRSA bacteria on the skin.
6. If it is necessary for you to go to another part of the hospital (for example X-ray), you must first wash your hands. You may need to wear a mask - a staff member will advise you. Staff accompanying you and/or helping in the other department will continue isolation precautions when you get there.

## What about your family/whanau and other visitors?

MRSA is not dangerous to your family/whanau, as it is generally only a problem for patients when they are sick in hospital. If a family member picks up the bacteria it will cause them no harm.

There is no reason to restrict visitors. However they will be asked to wash their hands before leaving the room. They do not need to wear gloves or masks because they are not caring for other sick patients. If they are visiting other patients in the hospital we will ask them to visit these patients before visiting you.

## Going home

If a District Nurse visits you at home she/he will wear gloves and apron while doing your dressing or caring for you. If your family helps with your cares it is not necessary for them to wear gloves or apron as because they are not caring for other sick patients.

Good personal hygiene including hand washing at home is recommended as part of a healthy lifestyle.