

MRSA Questions and Answers

What is MRSA and how common is it?

There are many useful bacteria on a person's skin. One of them is Staphylococcus aureus, which is often found also in the nasal mucous membrane and sometimes in the throat.

A type of Staphylococcus resistant to antibiotics that would be effective against normal Staphylococcus is called Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). MRSA is a world-wide problem, but fortunately, it does not yet occur much in Finnish hospitals.

What is meant by "MRSA carrier" and "MRSA infection"?

A person is said to be an MRSA carrier if the bacteria is grown in a specimen from in his or her body. MRSA is usually found on the skin or in mucous membranes and causes no symptoms.

MRSA infection means that the bacteria are causing symptoms of infection. Most MRSA carriers never develop an infection caused by MRSA.

How are MRSA carriers recognized?

MRSA may be found when a bacterial culture is done from blood, wounds, or urine or other body fluids due to an infection.

MRSA may also be found when specimens for identifying antibiotic-resistant bacteria are collected from patients who have been hospitalized abroad.

What types of infections are caused by MRSA bacteria, and how are they treated?

MRSA causes infections similar to those caused by regular Staphylococcus, such as infection of the nail wall, skin infections, postoperative wound infections, and systemic infections. Some of the potential infections are mild and do not require antibiotic therapy.

Although MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics, effective antibiotics for successfully treating MRSA infection do exist.

How is MRSA transmitted?

MRSA can spread from person to person through contact or by touching surfaces. Healthy people have a low risk of acquiring MRSA. It does not spread by air.

Why and how are efforts being made to prevent MRSA from spreading in the hospital?

Efforts are being made to prevent MRSA from spreading in hospitals because the spread of MRSA would make it more difficult to treat infections in seriously ill patients. Good hand hygiene

performed by both patients and staff is usually sufficient to prevent MRSA from spreading. You will receive hand hygiene instructions from staff.

The patient room will either be private or shared among MRSA patients throughout their hospital stay. A patient may leave the room only when escorted by staff. Hands are always disinfected when leaving the room. The staff wear protective gloves and disposable protective coats or aprons when caring for an MRSA carrier. Protective clothing need not be worn if the room is visited only briefly (e.g. to bring in a food tray, medicines, etc.).

Visits are normally permitted under the supervision of ward staff. Visitors receive instructions for good hand hygiene. If the visitors participate in care, they use protective gear as well.

I have MRSA. What now?

Being an MRSA carrier does not have any kind of impact on normal living (e.g. home, workplace, hobbies, interpersonal relationships). Just as usual, you should thoroughly wash your hands, using soap, after visiting the restroom and before handling food. If you have any wounds, follow the wound care instructions provided by your doctor. Hands should be washed before and after wound care. Use regular store-bought cleaning agents for cleaning.

MRSA detected in you will not increase your family members' risk of getting an infection.

Whom should I inform about MRSA carrier status, and how long does it last?

Being an asymptomatic MRSA carrier does not require treatment, but the proper antibiotic must be selected for the treatment of any infections caused by MRSA. It is important to always notify doctors or dentists if you or your family member is an MRSA carrier.

It is not necessary to inform anyone about MRSA carrier status in the workplace, at school, at a daycare center, in recreational settings, or anywhere beyond the healthcare sector.

It is not known precisely how long MRSA persists in a person's body. If more than a year has passed since MRSA was found, the cancellation of your MRSA carrier status may be considered if sampling no longer reveals the bacteria. This will be decided on a case-by-case basis by an infection control nurse and an infection control doctor.

Was your question not answered above?

Contact the ward where you were treated, the hospital infection control doctor, or an infection control nurse.