

What precautions should I take at home if I have MRSA or if I am caring for somebody with MRSA?

In the home, the following general precautions should be followed:

1. Good hand washing practice is the single most important measure. Your hands are an important route for spreading germs and should be washed regularly, especially before and after wound care and handling any drips or tubes that enter the body.

This is especially important if you are involved in changing or handling a dressing from a wound. Even when gloves are worn as an extra barrier, they should be thrown away with the soiled dressing. Hands should then be thoroughly washed again.

How to wash your hands properly



- Wet your hands under running water
 - Lather with soap
 - Cover all parts of your hands
 - Rinse well under running water
 - Dry thoroughly
- It should take around 30 seconds to wash your hands properly

2. Disposable gloves should be worn if you are in contact with
 - body fluids (e.g. blood or urine)
 - wound and other dressings / bandagesYou should also wash your hands after removing the gloves.
3. Cover cuts or breaks in your skin (e.g., wounds, drips) with waterproof dressings
4. Around the house
 - Special cleaning measures are not required
 - Keep surfaces dust-free and regularly vacuum carpets.
 - Clean your bath, shower, basins and toilets regularly with your usual cleaning products.
 - You should wash your clothes, bedding and linen as normal using your usual washing powder or liquid detergent at the hottest temperature suitable for the fabric.Your clothes can be incorporated into the normal wash as usual, taking care not to overload your machine. You can tumble dry or line dry and iron clothes as normal.



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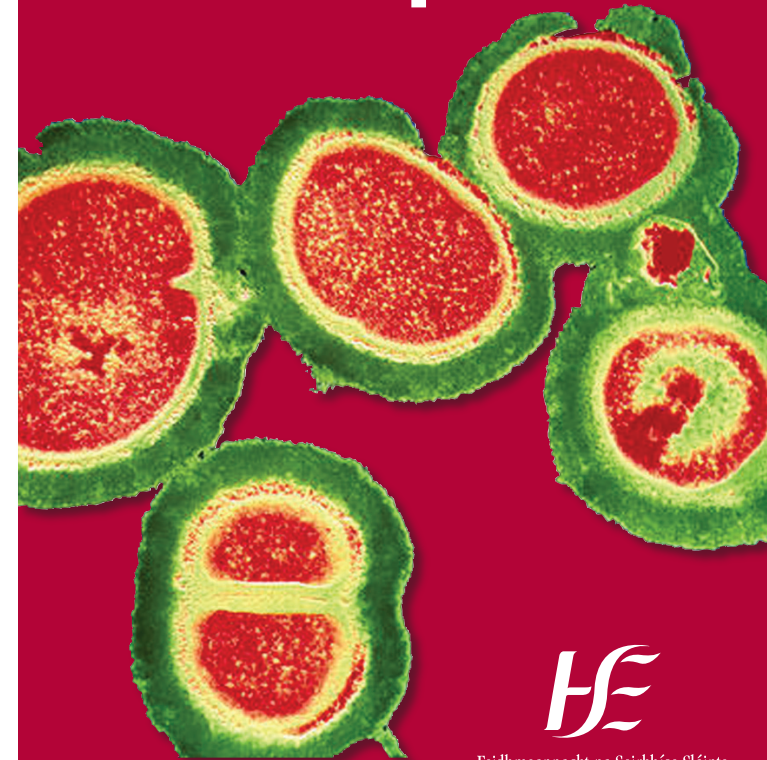
Further information on MRSA
is also available from the following websites :
www.hpsc.ie www.hse.ie

The Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC)
has a "Frequently Asked Questions" page on
Staph aureus and MRSA in the "Topics A-Z"
section of their website.

Information on the current levels of MRSA,
and other infections, in Ireland can also be found
in the EARSS section of the HPSC website

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Advice for those affected by MRSA outside of a hospital



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What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. *Staphylococcus aureus* or “Staph aureus” for short, is a common germ that is often found on the skin and in the nose of healthy people. In fact one in three of us has Staph Aureus living on (colonising) our skin.

When bacteria encounter an anti-biotic some of the bacteria can survive, particularly if the course of anti-biotic is not completed or there is an overuse of anti-biotics. The bacteria that survive can become anti-biotic resistant and can multiply. MRSA is a type of Staph aureus that has become resistant to treatment with a number of different antibiotics.

What is the difference between MRSA ‘colonisation’ and MRSA ‘infection?’

Most people who carry MRSA on their bodies or in their noses don’t suffer any ill effects. Carrying the germ harmlessly like this is called colonisation.

However MRSA sometimes causes infections if it enters the body, for example through a cut or wound. This is more likely to happen to people who are already unwell, particularly those who are in hospital with a serious illness.

Most MRSA infections are called “local” infections, such as boils, abscesses or infected wounds. These are easily treated. In a small number of people, however, MRSA can cause serious infections such as septicaemia (also known as a bloodstream infection or blood poisoning).

How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

Most people with MRSA carry the germ harmlessly and have no ill effects.

Patients who have an infection caused by MRSA do not look or feel any different to patients who have infections caused by other germs.

The only way to tell if someone is carrying MRSA, or has an infection caused by MRSA, is to do a laboratory test on a sample from a wound, blood, urine, nose, or other part of the body. If MRSA is found in a sample it means that the person has MRSA on their body.

How do people get MRSA?

MRSA exists outside hospitals. The people most at risk of getting MRSA include those who have:

- been in hospital for a long time
- a lot of contact with hospitals
- a long-term illness
- taken a lot of antibiotics

Are friends and relatives at risk when a person with MRSA is discharged from hospital?

In patients who are otherwise well, MRSA often disappears once the patient leaves the hospital and antibiotics are stopped. The risk to healthy relatives or others outside the hospital setting is extremely small. Relatives including babies, children, older people and pregnant women are **not** at risk from a patient with MRSA who has been discharged from hospital.

Mostly the germ does not cause harm to people unless it gains entry to the body via a break in the skin. Normal social contact such as holding hands or hugging does not usually present a risk. The only exception is if relatives or hospital workers come into contact with patients on a routine basis. There may be a risk of them transmitting MRSA to other patients.

Why then are people with MRSA isolated in hospitals if I don’t have to do this at home?

Even though most people with MRSA in hospital carry the germ harmlessly, hospitals take steps to stop the spread of MRSA to other sick people so that the risk of serious MRSA infections is reduced.

This is because patients in hospital are sicker than people at home. They are therefore more likely to get an MRSA infection than somebody at home.

What if I have MRSA infection and am pregnant or a nursing mother?

If you are pregnant, and fit and healthy, there are no additional risks from MRSA.

Breastfeeding is safe for you and your baby. However, in common with the usual advice given to breastfeeding mothers, if you notice certain symptoms, you should contact your GP, midwife or nurse for advice.

These include:

- painful breasts
- red patches or a sense of ‘lumpiness’ around the breasts
- flu-like symptoms, including a temperature

These symptoms indicate that you may have mastitis but this may or may not be MRSA. It is important that you tell your doctor or nurse that you have or have had MRSA so that they can treat you appropriately.

If my child has MRSA, can my child go to school/nursery?

Children in whom MRSA has been detected can attend nursery and go to school as normal. You do not have to inform the school or nursery.

If I have MRSA, can I do my normal activities and go to work?

MRSA does not prevent you going about your usual activities, including socialising, swimming, going to the gym etc. Regardless of whether you have MRSA or not, you should avoid swimming if you have a sore or open wound, and cover sores and wounds completely with a waterproof dressing if you are taking part in sports.

In general, you will be able to go to work as normal. However, if you work in a healthcare setting, and have an MRSA infection, you should contact the occupational health service for advice.

Do I have to tell people that I have MRSA?

You do not have to tell anyone that you have MRSA. However, if you go to your GP or visit the hospital for treatment, you should share this information with your doctor as it may influence the type of treatment you get.

