

- What is MRSA and how does it affect patients and the people around them – family and friends, nurses, doctors, and other patients?
- This leaflet has been designed to answer these questions.

What is MRSA:

MRSA stands for methicillin (M) resistant (R) Staphylococcus (S) aureus (A). It is a variety of a common germ called Staphylococcus aureus. This germ lives completely harmlessly on the skin and in the nose of about one third of people. It is more common on skin that is broken – if you have a cut, a sore, or a rash such as eczema. People who have MRSA on their bodies or in their nose but who are unharmed by it are described as being colonised.

MRSA can cause problems when it gets the opportunity to enter the body. This is more likely to happen in people who are already unwell. MRSA causes abscesses, boils, and it can infect wounds – accidental wounds such as grazes and deliberate wounds such as those made for a drip or during surgery. These are called local infections. It may then spread into the body and cause serious infections such as septicaemia (blood poisoning).

MRSA is resistant to methicillin (a type of penicillin) and some of the other drugs that are commonly used to treat infections.

How can you tell if someone has MRSA?

Patients who have MRSA do not look or feel different from other patients. Your nurse takes swabs from your skin or nose, or takes samples of urine or sputum and these are sent to a laboratory. If the laboratory grows MRSA, it carries out further tests. The doctor uses the results of these tests to decide which drugs are used to treat you.

How did I get MRSA?

You may have acquired MRSA before you came into the hospital, or you may have acquired it in hospital.

How does MRSA change the way that you look after me – and what will happen now?

MRSA affects the way that we look after patients. It is sensitive to some drugs, but these drugs may be more difficult to use or may cause side effects more often than some of other drugs that are used to treat infections. We also take steps to prevent MRSA spreading to other patients.

Your nurse will take more swabs to check if the MRSA is confined to one or two parts of your body or if it is widespread. Your doctor will prescribe treatment to get rid of it. The treatment depends on how widespread the MRSA is.

If you have MRSA on your skin, hair or nose, you may be given antiseptic body and hair shampoo, and antibacterial cream for your nose. If you have a local infection such as an infected wound or if you have a serious infection, you may be treated with antibiotics that kill MRSA. If you are in an open ward area, you may be moved to a single room in order to prevent MRSA spreading to other patients in the ward.

Can I have visitors – or can MRSA harm my family and friends?

MRSA does not harm healthy people, including pregnant women, children and babies. MRSA can affect people who have certain long-term health problems. Please ask the nursing staff first if someone who has a long-term health problem wants to visit you. Your visitors will be asked to wash their hands after visiting you so that they do not spread MRSA to other people.

Will I have to stay longer in hospital because I have MRSA?

Most patients who are colonised with MRSA do not usually have to stay longer in hospital. If you have a local infection or a serious infection, you may have to stay in hospital until it shows signs of clearing up.

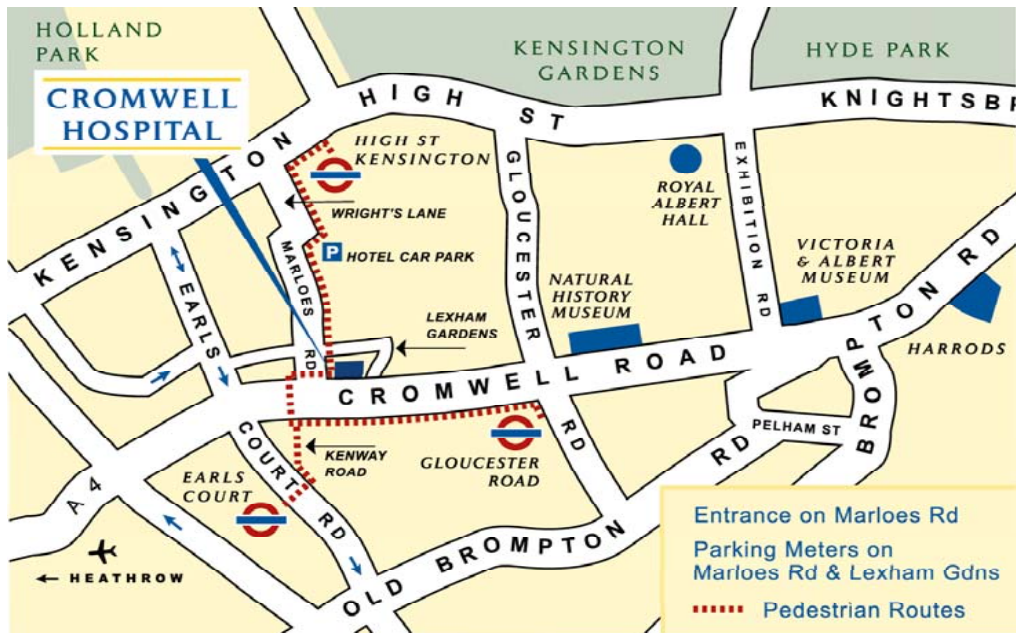
Will I need treatment for MRSA when I go home?

If you are colonised with MRSA, you may be treated, particularly if you are likely to be readmitted to hospital. If you have a local or serious MRSA infection, you may need to continue treatment when you go home.

Where can I get more information about MRSA?

1. The Association of Medical Microbiologists publish a leaflet called 'The facts about MRSA'. You can obtain a copy from their website www.amm.co.uk/html/publications.htm
2. Data on MRSA infections in England and Wales are available via the Infectious Disease section of the Health Protection Agency website www.hpa.org.uk
3. The Centres for Disease Control, Atlanta, Georgia, have information about MRSA for patients on their website www.cdc.gov/ncidod/hip/aresist/mrsaq.htm

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MRSA

(Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

Information for Patients



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