

## MRSA Fact Sheet / FAQ

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a common bacterium or germ which commonly lives in the nose and on the skin. Most people who carry the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria do not have an infection. Sometimes people develop infections with this bacterium and require treatment.

When common antibiotics are not able to destroy *Staphylococcus aureus*, the bacterium is called “resistant”, or MRSA. Infections caused by MRSA are not more serious than infections caused by the regular *Staphylococcus aureus* bacterium.

### **What are the symptoms of MRSA?**

Staph skin infections, including MRSA, generally start as small red bumps that resemble pimples, boils or spider bites. These can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that require surgical draining. Sometimes the bacteria remain confined to the skin. But they can also burrow deep into the body, causing potentially life-threatening infections in bones, joints, surgical wounds, the bloodstream, heart valves and lungs.

### **When should I see a doctor?**

Keep an eye on minor skin problems — pimples, insect bites, cuts and scrapes — especially in children. If wounds become infected, see your doctor. Do not attempt to treat an MRSA infection yourself. You could worsen it or spread it to others.

### **How is MRSA spread?**

MRSA is spread from one person to another by contact. MRSA can be present on hands either from touching contaminated material excreted by the infected person or from touching articles contaminated by the skin of a person with MRSA, such as towels, sheets and wound dressings. MRSA can live on hands and objects in the environment, such as washrooms, razors, and other personal hygiene objects.

### **What is an outbreak?**

An outbreak can mean many different things depending upon many different factors. For BCHS, an outbreak is declared on a ward when there have been three or more new cases of MRSA bacteria present on skin over a seven day period.

### **What precautions are required for MRSA?**

It is important that special precautions are taken to stop MRSA from spreading to other patients in the hospital. These precautions include:

- The room and the equipment used in the room will be cleaned and disinfected regularly
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands well
- You must clean your hands before you leave your room and put on gloves and a gown

- You must clean your hands before and after you touch any patients
- You must not share personal equipment such as toothbrushes, razors, cosmetics, towels, etc.
- You must cover open wounds

### **What about Family/Visitors?**

During this outbreak, BCHS has limited visiting hours from 12 noon to 8 p.m. with a maximum of two visitors per patient. Visiting hours for palliative care and critical care remain unrestricted.

Your family and visitors should not assist other patients with their personal care as this may cause the germ to spread. Before leaving your room, visitors must properly dispose of any gloves and gowns, as well as ensure their hands have been cleaned using soap and water, or waterless alcohol hand rub. Please also see our [poster](#) for more information.

### **Good hand hygiene practices:**

Remind all staff and visitors to practice good hand hygiene before and after they touch you. Ask your nurse, doctor or allied healthcare worker to demonstrate proper hand hygiene techniques (15 seconds and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub until hands are dry).

### **What will happen at home?**

If you have MRSA at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading the germ to your family is small. But, we do recommend that you practice the following:

- Everyone who might help you with your personal hygiene or with going to the toilet should wash their hands after contact with you.
- Wash your hands before you make any food and before you eat. This practice should be followed by everyone in the household.
- Wash your hands well after using the toilet. Make sure others that use the bathroom wash their hands well afterwards.
- Clothing may be laundered in the same manner as the rest of the household laundry.
- No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g. dishes) in home is required.
- Always tell your physician, paramedics, nurse or other care providers that you have MRSA. This helps prevent spread to others.

### **I have an appointment at the Brantford General Hospital soon – will I be safe?**

The current outbreak is affecting only two areas of the hospital. As long as you adhere to standard hand washing procedures and take the necessary precautions (as outlined above), you should not acquire MRSA. If you still have concerns, you can rebook your appointment at the Brantford General Hospital. Please keep an eye on our website for updates as to when the outbreak is declared over.

**Thank you for your cooperation during this time. We understand this may cause concern or an inconvenience, but proper hand hygiene and a reduction in visiting hours is something we must do to control any further spread of the bacteria.**