Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) Screening – What to expect

Q  What is MRSA?
A  MRSA is a type of bacteria (germ). It is carried harmlessly by people often in their nose or on their skin. We all carry lots of bacteria and usually it doesn’t cause a problem. But when a person goes into hospital carrying MRSA and has a procedure that involves breaking the skin, then the MRSA can get in to the body and may cause an infection.

Q  Why am I being screened for MRSA?
A  Many people carry MRSA on their skin or in their nose. If we find out you are carrying MRSA before you go into hospital we can use a simple treatment to eliminate as much of it as possible. This means the chances of you getting an MRSA infection, or passing MRSA on to another patient, are much smaller.

Q  When and where will I be screened for MRSA?
A  If your admission is elective / planned, you will usually be screened before you come into hospital for your operation. This may be in a pre-admission assessment clinic, an outpatient clinic or sometimes at your GP surgery. Typically, a nurse will take the swabs as part of the other checks leading up to your hospital stay like your blood pressure and blood test. If your admission is unplanned, you will be screened in hospital as above.

Q  How will I be screened for MRSA?
A  We can find out if you are carrying MRSA by taking a sample, using a swab in your nose or on your skin. Swabs may be taken from different sites, such as the nose, armpit or groin. A swab is a cotton bud which is placed on the area of skin to be tested (such as up your nose). The test is painless and only takes a few seconds.

Q  When will I get the results from the swabs?
A  Your swabs will be sent to a laboratory, which tests them for MRSA. The results usually take between 3-5 days, but may be sooner.
Q  What happens after I have been screened?
A  If you are found to be carrying MRSA on your skin or in your nose a member of staff will inform you if you are an inpatient at the time of the result. If you have been discharged home your GP will be informed of the result. Do not worry. Lots of people carry MRSA. Carrying MRSA does not make you ill and you are not a risk to healthy people. This includes older people, pregnant women, children and babies. A doctor or nurse will let you know what you need to do next.

Q  What is the treatment?
A  MRSA is a type of bacteria that has become resistant to a group of antibiotics called Meticillin but doctors can still treat MRSA infections with some other sorts of antibiotics. The treatment is simple. You will usually need to use a special body and hair wash and a special cream in your nose before you come into hospital for your operation or procedure.

If you are not carrying MRSA you are unlikely to be contacted by the hospital or your GP. If you are not contacted you should just continue with your planned hospital care.

| Remember, if you are worried about MRSA talk to your local NHS clinic nurse, your GP or Practise Nurse, or look on the NHS Choices website www.nhs.uk where you can find out more about MRSA. |

Did you know?
MRSA has been around for many years, it was first identified in the 1960’s.

Did you know?
In England, MRSA infection rates in hospitals are falling. Compared to four years ago*, the number of MRSA infections has more than halved.
*Between 2008/09 and 2012/13 MRSA bloodstream infections across England fell by 69% (PHE 2013)