

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

ABOUT

MRSA SCREENING

Information/advice for patients, relatives and carers

This information is available in other formats on request. Please ask your nursing staff to arrange this

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust is proud of its low rates of MRSA and we work hard to maintain high standards of cleanliness and infection control. This leaflet explains what MRSA is and describes how we are working towards eliminating MRSA infections. We would like to let you know about the MRSA screening that we offer to our patients and why it may be offered to you.

Who does the Trust offer MRSA screening to and why?

Current Department of Health guidance states that patients coming into hospital for certain procedures must be offered testing for MRSA. Other groups of patients, including those admitted in an emergency, are also offered screening. The purpose of screening is to identify patients who may be carrying MRSA so that treatment can be offered to help reduce the risk of MRSA infection.

Is screening for MRSA compulsory?

No. You have the right to decline an offer of MRSA screening. If you would rather not be tested we would, however, recommend you discuss this with the nurse in charge, or a member of the IPCT on 01423 553112 to help you make an informed choice.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and is a type of bacterium which has become resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics. It is important to remember that MRSA is not a problem for most people especially those who are normally fit and well.

How can I catch MRSA?

MRSA is often thought of as a hospital germ, but, in fact, it can be caught or just passed on almost anywhere. MRSA is commonly spread on the hands. If hands come into contact with MRSA and are not washed thoroughly before touching someone else, the MRSA germs can be spread.

Where is MRSA found?

Although MRSA can be found in the environment in dust, it prefers to live in the nose, armpit, groins and wounds of people. Carrying MRSA in this way is not a problem for most people, especially those who are usually fit and healthy.

Why is MRSA a problem in hospitals?

In hospital there are many patients whose body defences are weakened because of illness. This makes it more difficult for them to fight off germs/infections such as MRSA.

What will screening involve?

A sterile swab (which is like a large cotton bud) is taken from just inside both nostrils. If you have any wounds, sores, catheters or other tubes, swabs may also be taken from these sites. This is procedure.

What will happen if MRSA is not found?

If you have not heard from the hospital within 7 days, your test result is negative and no further action is required.

What will happen if MRSA is found?

If MRSA is found, the hospital staff will let you know. Treatment will be discussed with you. This involves applying an ointment to your nostrils and use of an antiseptic skin wash. This is intended

to reduce the MRSA to very low levels. Decreasing the number of MRSA bacteria in this way reduces the chance of an MRSA infection after a surgical or other hospital procedure.

Once I have been screened for MRSA will I need to be screened again?

Following your hospital admission you may be offered re-screening for MRSA if you are to be readmitted to hospital at a future date. The staff involved in your care will discuss this with you.

How can I get more information about this?

You can ask the nursing staff in charge of your care and they will be happy to give you further information or advice or you can contact the IPC Team on 01423 553112.

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