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INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

What is MRSA? (A concise guide)

(Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

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If you require this information in an alternative language or format (such as large print), please ask your nursing staff to arrange this or contact the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses on the number provided on the back page of this leaflet.

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a germ that many of the population carry on their skin or in their nose at any time without being aware of it. These individuals have no problems as a result of this and are simply carriers. Any infections caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* can be effectively treated with a variety of antibiotics. MRSA is a *Staphylococcus aureus* which has become resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics and because of this infections caused by MRSA are more difficult to treat. MRSA is often associated with patients in hospital but can also be found on people in the community and in nursing and residential homes.

It is important to remember that MRSA holds no problems for those of us who are fit and well.

Where is MRSA found?

Although MRSA can be found in the environment and in dust, it prefers to live in warm moist areas such as a person's nose, armpit, groins and any wounds. It has also been found on healthcare workers, patients' and visitors' hands.

How is MRSA treated?

MRSA can be treated with antiseptic lotions, ointments and sometimes combinations of antibiotics. People who are carriers of MRSA do not usually require treatments, but this may be considered if you are coming into hospital for an operation. If you are known to be a carrier of MRSA you may be nursed in a single room whilst in hospital, to prevent its spread to other vulnerable patients.

Why is MRSA a problem in hospitals?

In hospital there are many patients who are seriously ill and therefore may be too weak to fight off germs/infections.

Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust is proud of its relatively low rates of MRSA, and we work hard to maintain high standards of cleanliness and infection control.

Preventing MRSA infection in hospital

You can help prevent infections like MRSA by:-

- Washing your own hands frequently and carefully, especially before eating, after going to the toilet and whenever they look or feel dirty.
- If you are unable to wash your hands, please ask for a hand wipe. (You may wish to bring some moist wipes into hospital with you).
- Alcohol hand gel rubs are available on all wards. Just dispense a shot of gel into the centre of one hand, and rub the gel all over both hands until dry. Alcohol gels only work on clean hands. If your hands look or feel dirty, wash with soap and water.
- Do not touch or disturb your dressing or be tempted to "have a peep" as this may introduce infection. Ask a nurse to replace any dressing that gets loose or wet.
- If you have a catheter or draining bag, let your nurse know if it is full, loose or become dislodged. The nurse should empty the bag and ensure that it is kept clean and dry.
- Any intravenous device (usually a plastic needle in your hand or arm) is a potential entry site for germs. Ask for the device to be removed if it has not been used for 24 hours, and tell staff immediately if you experience any pain, tenderness or redness near the device.

If you have any questions regarding your risk of infection, please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or ask to speak to one of the Infection Prevention and Control Nurses on 01423 553112.