

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)



the women's
the royal women's hospital

What is Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)?

Staphylococcus aureus, often called 'Staph' or 'Golden Staph', is a common germ that lives on the skin or in the nose of 1 in 3 people. Most of the time it doesn't cause any problems. But sometimes it can cause serious infections that need treatment with antibiotics.

Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of Staph that is harder to kill with antibiotics because it has developed resistance and doesn't respond as well to these medicines.

How can you get MRSA?

You can get MRSA by touching surfaces or things that have MRSA on them. You can also get it from other people, and it can spread in the community and in hospitals.

How can you help stop the spread of MRSA?

- When you're in hospital, you can ask your healthcare worker if they've washed their hands.
- Clean your hands often with alcohol-based hand rub or wash with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before preparing food. This is the most effective way to prevent spreading MRSA.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces at home, like door handles, taps, benches, and toilets, regularly.
- Don't share personal items like towels, face cloths, nail scissors, razors, or toothbrushes.

- Avoid touching any wounds, drips, or surgical drains. If you need to touch them, clean your hands before and after.

What should you do if you have MRSA and need surgery?

Before you have surgery, you may need to reduce the amount of MRSA on your skin and in your nose. This is called 'decolonisation'. It reduces your risk of developing an infection. You may need to use a medicated body wash and nasal spray for up to a week before your surgery.

For some surgeries at The Women's, we will give you antibiotics directly into your vein (intravenous) while you're in the operating room. This helps lower your risk of infection as you heal.

If you have MRSA, we will give you additional antibiotics to further reduce your risk of infection following surgery.

How do you know if you still have MRSA?

We can check to see if you still have MRSA. This process is called 'clearance testing'. Clearance testing isn't a treatment for MRSA. It helps us see if MRSA is still in or on your body 3 months after your last positive test. If there is no MRSA, you won't have to stay in an isolation room when you're in the hospital.

The Women's usually can't complete clearance testing because it takes a long time, but your local doctor (GP) can help. Take this information to your GP to discuss your clearance plan.

Once your GP confirms you're cleared, you will need to provide the hospital with your test results.

What do you need before starting MRSA clearance testing?

You are ready for MRSA clearance testing if you:

- haven't had a positive MRSA tests for more than 3 months
- have all your wounds healed and no drips or drains in your body
- haven't used any antibiotics or antiseptic body washes for at least 2 weeks
- haven't received any anti-MRSA antibiotic treatment in the past 3 months.

How do we test for MRSA?

To find out if you have MRSA, we ask to take 1 or more samples from you. This may involve:

- using a swab (like a cotton bud) to take samples from your nose, throat, groin, or armpit
- swabbing any cuts, wounds, or rashes on your skin
- collecting a sample of your urine (wee)
- asking you to cough so we can collect a sample of mucus (sputum) from your lungs.

We will send your samples for testing to see if you have MRSA.

Can you get MRSA again?

You can get MRSA again even after clearance. Decolonisation also may not stop you from getting it in the future. Sometimes, clearance testing shows that the MRSA is still there.

Information for your GP: Steps for MRSA clearance testing

1. Take swabs from the nose, throat, groin/perineum and any clinically relevant sites (e.g. previous MRSA positive sites) on **2 or more occasions**, with **at least 1 week** between each set of swabs.
2. Send all swab results to infection.control@thewomens.org.au for evaluation before removing MRSA from your file.

Family Violence Support

1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

1800respect.org.au

Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.