



**TIMMINS AND DISTRICT HOSPITAL**  
**Infection Control**  
18/06/03

## **Special Isolation Precautions for Patients with Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA)**

### **Information for Patients and Visitors**

One of your tests (cultures) shows that you are carrying **MRSA (Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)**. Staff must now take special precautions when taking care of you. This information sheet may help you and your family to understand the procedures more clearly.

### **What is an antibiotic resistant germ?**

When someone has an infection, antibiotics are medicines that are used to kill the germ (bacteria) causing the infection. An antibiotic resistant germ is not killed by the usual antibiotics. If an antibiotic resistant germ causes an infection, then a stronger drug must be used.

### **What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacteria that lives on human skin, and it can also live in the nose. The usual antibiotics used to treat infections caused by *Staphylococcus aureus* is called Methicillin. Some strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* are not killed by Methicillin and are said to be Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

### **Can it be harmful?**

*Staphylococcus aureus* are normal germs which do not harm people and are needed to keep people healthy. In a hospital, if any germ gets into a wound or the bloodstream it could cause an infection. When a person has an infection with MRSA it can be difficult to treat because the usual antibiotics can't get rid of it.

### **How did I get MRSA?**

People who are in hospitals or nursing homes get MRSA. It is spread by contact with the hands. Caregivers can unknowingly transmit the germ during routine activities and procedures between patients.

## **Why are special precautions needed?**

Special precautions are needed in order to prevent the spread of the organism to other patients in the hospital, who are also ill and therefore more likely to develop an infection.

## **What will be different?**

- *You will need to stay in your room.*
- People who are taking care of you will wear gowns, gloves and masks to prevent them from picking up the MRSA and from taking it to other patients.
- It is very important for all staff and visitors to wash their hands when they come in and when they leave your room.
- Signs will be placed outside the room to remind everyone about the special precautions
- If you need to go to another part of the hospital for tests or treatments, you must wash your hands before you leave your room.

## **What about family and visitors?**

You may still have visitors. They must wash their hands when they come in and when they leave your room. They should put on gowns, gloves and masks too.

## **What will happen when I leave the hospital?**

If you go to another health care facility or if you have services from Home Care, some precautions might be taken. This is to prevent your care givers from picking up the germ and spreading it to other patients. Good hand washing is very important to reduce the risk of spread.

## **What about at home?**

If your family or friends do not look after other sick people, there is no need to worry.

MRSA is no more dangerous than other normal bacteria that people carry on their skin and are exposed to every day. Remind everyone to wash their hands often. You should wash your hands after you go to the bathroom, touch your nose or a wound.

## **Will this go away?**

It might go away on its own, but your doctor and infection control have ordered an antibiotic cream to put into your nose and on any wounds you have. This should be used 3 times a day for a week. Also, you should wash your body with a special liquid soap. This will help to get rid of the MRSA faster.

After you finish using the cream and soap, cultures will be taken of your nose, rectum and any wounds for a few weeks. After there are 3 sets that do not show MRSA, you can come out of isolation. If you are still in the hospital, you will stay in a private room, and you will continue to be checked regularly to make sure you still do not have MRSA.

## **How can I help?**

If you go to another doctor or another hospital, please tell your doctor and nurse or other care givers that you were once on special precautions for MRSA. This will allow them to check your status and use precautions to make sure that they do not carry the organism to other patients.

## **What if I am admitted to the hospital again?**

On any future admissions to the hospital, you may be placed in a single room and special precautions may be taken. Swabs of your nose, rectum and any wounds will be taken to make sure there is no MRSA. Even if special precautions are not being followed, we may keep you in the private room and you will be checked regularly to make sure you still do not have MRSA.

If you have any further questions, please ask your nurse or doctor or contact Infection Control at 267-6344.