

**Information for patients undergoing
Breast Surgery**

**Methicillin Resistant
Staphylococcus aureus
(MRSA)**

1. What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a very common bacteria that many people can carry on their skin. Some strains of the bacteria are resistant to particular antibiotics and these strains are referred to as Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA). Both MRSA and *Staphylococcus aureus* can sometimes be present in patients in hospital.

2. Are there any symptoms if you have the MRSA germ?

This bacteria is often present without any symptoms. When it does cause an infection, symptoms include boils, abscesses or wound infections.

3. Why do we hear so much about MRSA in relation to hospitals?

MRSA can be a problem in hospitals because it may cause infections in some patients. There are antibiotics available to treat the infections but the choice is limited. MRSA may be present in the nose and on the skin of patients, without hospital staff being aware of this.

The easiest way to stop the spread of MRSA and other germs in hospitals is by everyone practising good hand hygiene.

4. Why am I having swabs taken?

As you are due to have surgery in the near future, swabs are taken from an area of the body where the MRSA bacteria may be present (usually the nose and groin). These are then tested in the laboratory to see if the bacteria is present. However, it is important to know that sometimes the MRSA

on the surface of the skin is of such low levels, the germ may not always be detected on the swab.

5. What happens if you are found to have MRSA?

The ward doctor will contact you at home via telephone and your GP will be informed. Your operation may be postponed whilst we attempt to get rid of the bacteria. You may be prescribed a nasal ointment and an antiseptic skin wash for washing or showering. We will also ask your GP to take further swabs. This is to ensure we reduce your risk of post-operative infection.

6. What should you do about MRSA when you are at home?

At home a person carrying MRSA on their skin will not cause any problems for family or friends. It is very important to understand that normal social contact with somebody who has MRSA or has received treatment for MRSA is not a problem

7. If I have MRSA, how can I find out more?

If you are unsure about the information you have received about MRSA, you can speak to the pre-operative assessment sister or your GP.

Pre-operative assessment clinic

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