

# **MRSA**

## **Information for Patients and Whānau**

### **What is MRSA?**

MRSA is a type of bacteria, or germ. It stands for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. MRSA is resistant to many commonly used antibiotics, which means that many normal antibiotics do not treat MRSA infections.

Sometimes people have MRSA bacteria living on or in their bodies, and it doesn't cause a problem. This is called colonisation. A colonised person feels well and has no signs or symptoms of infection.

When a person is diagnosed with an MRSA infection, special antibiotics are needed to treat the infection. After the infection is cured, that person could still be colonised with MRSA.

Once a person is diagnosed as being MRSA positive (having had an MRSA infection in the past) hospitals and health care workers care for that person with special precautions. This is to lower the chance of healthcare workers transferring MRSA from one person to the next person they look after.

### **Is MRSA a Risk to my Whānau?**

Whānau are not usually at risk when a loved one has MRSA. Good hygiene practices like showering or bathing every day, and washing hands after using the toilet and before eating are normally enough to stop germs spreading.

MRSA can make at-risk people very unwell because they can get infections more easily. People with low or compromised immune systems, the very old, the very young, and people who have just had surgery are more likely to get infections.

Healthcare workers look after many people at a time, and frequently touch the people they are caring for. This is why healthcare workers need to take special precautions to stop themselves from spreading MRSA to other patients in their care.

### **Special Precautions**

MRSA is spread by touching a person already carrying MRSA bacteria, or by touching an item in a colonised persons' room. In order to stop MRSA travelling to other patients, the following special precautions are used.

**Isolation:** This means staying in your own room, with no other patients. Whānau and friends are welcome to visit as normal. If visitors are seeing more than one person in the hospital, they should see the person with MRSA last. Visitors are encouraged to sanitise their hands with alcohol based hand rub when they leave the room.

**Contact Precautions:** These are used by healthcare workers. This means healthcare workers will wear gloves and a yellow gown when they are in the colonised persons' room. This is to stop MRSA from touching their skin or clothing, which could then be passed on to other patients.

## Clearance

Sometimes it is possible for a person diagnosed with MRSA to be “cleared”. Clearance means proving that there is no more MRSA bacteria left on the affected person’s skin. Becoming “cleared” is a process that takes time. Three separate sets of swabs are taken by your GP over at least a six month period. The results are then sent to the District Health Board Infection Control Team, who review all the results and make a judgement based on a number of factors.

Sometimes the clearance process is not successful. If this is the case, the special precautions described in this pamphlet will still be used for any future admissions to hospital.

## Questions?

If you or you whānau have any questions, or would like to know more about clearance please ask the nurse who is caring for you. Alternatively, you can talk to your specialist, your GP, or other health care provider.

Braemar Hospital staff work hard to provide excellent care to all patients throughout their stay in hospital. If you would like discuss your experience of Braemar with us, please tell your nurse you would like to speak to someone about your experience. Or, you can submit feedback in the patient satisfaction survey. An appropriate person will contact you to discuss any queries you may have.

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