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# MRSA: Screening prior to Surgery

## Infection Control



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## Further Information

We endeavor to provide an excellent service at all times, but should you have any concerns please, in the first instance, raise these with the Clinical Nurse Lead, Senior Nurse or Manager on duty. If they cannot resolve your concern, please contact our Patient Experience Team on 01932 723553 or email [asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net](mailto:asp-tr.patient.advice@nhs.net). If you remain concerned, the team can also advise upon how to make a formal complaint.

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# MRSA: Screening prior to Surgery

## Introduction

**Staphylococcus aureus** (SA) is a bacterium that normally lives on the skin particularly the nose, skin folds, hairline and perineum of approximately 30% of the population. It commonly survives in these areas without causing infection – a state known as colonisation. **Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)** is a type of SA which is resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics. MRSA can also live harmlessly on the skin and is found in about 5% of the population.

## Why should I be screened for MRSA?

- It is a myth that you can only catch MRSA in hospital. MRSA also exists in the community.
- People can become carriers of MRSA in the same way that they become a carrier of any other bacteria; by physical contact with the organism. MRSA can be found in hospital environments but can also be brought into hospital by patients and visitors. Therefore it is essential we identify those who are colonised (present without causing harm) with MRSA prior to admission. From 2009 all elective patients undergoing surgery are required to be MRSA screened (DH 2008).

## Who should be screened?

- All planned admissions for surgery and medicine.

## When should I be screened?

- Screening will be undertaken at pre-operative assessment or your outpatient appointment.

## Screening

- Verbal consent will be obtained and documented in your medical records.
- Swabs will be taken from your nose and groin.
- The laboratory takes approximately 24-48 hours to process the specimen.
- You will only be notified of a **positive** result.

## What happens if I am MRSA positive?

- If you are found to be a carrier of MRSA you will be contacted and asked to see your GP, who will also be informed of the result. You will be prescribed a special solution to wash your body and hair, as well as a nasal ointment for your nose. An information leaflet will be given to you and the process explained.

## Can I do anything to help prevent MRSA transmission in the health care setting?

- MRSA and other hospital acquired infections are usually passed on by human contact via the hands. This is why hand hygiene is so important.

## Additional Information

Should you have any further questions or require further advice please contact the pre-assessment department on the telephone number you were given on your appointment letter.