

MRSA

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. It's a type of antibiotic-resistant bacteria. These are often called 'superbugs'.

Superbugs are resistant to many antibiotics. This means that some antibiotics that were used to treat them no longer work very well.

How you get MRSA

MRSA is a common bug, especially for people who spend a lot of time in hospital. This is because lots of people carry superbugs in hospital. This makes it easier for them to spread.

There's often no way of knowing when or where you picked it up.

MRSA can live harmlessly on skin, in the nose, in wounds and in leg ulcers.

If they do not cause infection, bacteria can go away within days or months without you noticing. It can also grow under skin. This can lead to a skin, fat or muscle infection.

MRSA can cause serious infection if it gets into your blood.

Preventing the spread of MRSA

Lower the risk of picking up and spreading MRSA in hospitals by:

- [cleaning your hands often](#)
- use your own soap, flannel, sponge and razor
- keeping your fingernails cut short to stop bacteria from building up under your nails

If you are in hospital:

- limit contact with patients and keep away from their bed space
- avoid sharing food, newspapers or other personal items with patients
- tell staff if facilities in a hospital or clinic are not clean

⚠ If you know you carry MRSA

Tell the doctor when you make an appointment and when you get to the surgery or hospital. If you're in hospital, you might need to stay in your own room or a ward with people who carry MRSA.

If you carry MRSA, this should not get in the way of your normal home life. MRSA is less likely to harm people well enough to be at home.

You do not need to limit contact with anyone. You also do not need to tell friends or family that you have MRSA.

Diagnosing MRSA

You might need to give samples if you're in hospital or going into hospital.

A doctor or nurse will take samples from your skin, nose and other parts of the body.

The sample is then sent to a lab for testing. You should get the result back within a few days.

Symptoms of MRSA infection

Symptoms of serious MRSA infection include:

- a high temperature
- aches and pains
- chills
- tiredness
- weakness
- confusion

If MRSA grow under the skin, this can lead to a skin, fat or muscle infection.

Symptoms include:

- redness
- swelling
- warmth
- pain and sometimes pus from the skin

Causes of MRSA infection

MRSA are more likely to cause an infection for people who are already very sick.

Healthy people are not usually at risk of MRSA infections. This includes children and pregnant women.

The following things can put you at higher risk of MRSA infection:

- major surgery
- having a medical device inserted into your body, such as a catheter or IV line
- cancer treatment
- treatment in an intensive care unit or transplant ward

Treatment of MRSA

If you carry MRSA, you may need treatment to remove it.

This usually involves washing with antibacterial shampoo and putting antibacterial cream in your nose.

Any skin irritation from treatment products should be mild. If you get a rash, stop treatment and ask your GP or pharmacist for advice.

During treatment, change your bedding, clothes and towel every day. Keep your laundry separate from other people's items. Wash it at the highest temperature possible for the material.

MRSA infection

If you have an MRSA infection, you can be treated with [antibiotics](#).

[How to clean your hands](#)

[Common illnesses](#)

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