

MRSA – patient information

Why have I received this information?

Tests have shown that you have a bacterium that is resistant to antibiotics, called MRSA. In this information sheet you can find out more about what this means and what to do to avoid infecting others.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus and is a variant of staphylococcus bacteria that has become resistant to certain antibiotics.

MRSA can be present on the skin or mucous membranes without the person being sick, and this is referred to as being a carrier. Like normal staphylococci, MRSA can sometimes cause infections, such as wound infections.

MRSA does not cause more or more serious infections than normal staphylococci, but treating an infection requires the use of specific types of antibiotics.

How is MRSA transmitted?

MRSA can be transmitted between people, primarily through skin contact, such as via their hands. The bacteria can also attach to things in the environment, such as exercise equipment, and spread from there.

A person who is only a carrier of MRSA rarely infects others. Certain conditions increase the amount of bacteria, and therefore also increase the risk of spreading infection. These are called risk factors for spreading infection.

Risk factors for spreading infection can, for example, be the following:

- skin infections, such as infected wounds, boils or impetigo
- open wounds
- worsening or oozing eczema/eczema of the ear canal
- certain chronic skin diseases
- catheters or stomas.

Can MRSA be eliminated?

MRSA often goes away on its own. It can take different amounts of time, from months to years. You need to have samples taken repeatedly to know that the bacteria are gone. It is the doctor in charge of MRSA who decides when the check-ups and rules of conduct listed below are no longer needed. The check-ups can often be stopped when MRSA has not been found in two consecutive samples over a period of at least three months.

What should I keep in mind so as not to infect others?

The most important thing you can do is to practice good hand hygiene. If you do not have any risk factors, you can carry on as usual and the risk of spreading the infection is low.

Children can continue to attend preschool and school, and participate in all activities. Parents/guardians do not have to inform the preschool or school that their child is a

carrier of MRSA. Preschool children may sometimes need to stay at home – please see the rules of conduct below.

If you work with animals, you can get specific advice. Your doctor can then consult with a medical infectious disease officer.

Rules of conduct

MRSA is classified as a disease that represents a danger to public health in the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. You must therefore follow certain rules given to you by your doctor, known as the 'rules of conduct':

- If you have risk factors for spreading infection, you must follow the specific hygiene practices described below.
- If you have an ongoing skin infection, open wounds or oozing eczema, you should not participate in sports with a lot of bodily contact or use communal exercise facilities or gyms.
- Preschool children should stay at home if they have infected wounds, impetigo, or worsening, oozing eczema.
- If you have an ongoing skin infection, open wounds or oozing eczema, you must disclose that you are a carrier of MRSA when getting piercings, tattoos, massages, non-podiatric foot care and similar treatments of the skin or mucous membranes.
- You must disclose that you are a carrier of MRSA when receiving medical, dental and podiatric care. This also applies if you receive care or nursing in a residential or home environment. If you only get help with shopping, cleaning, sorting medicine or going for walks, you do not need to disclose that you are a carrier of MRSA.
- If you are working or studying within the field of healthcare or social care, you should not participate in care work if your doctor considers that you have risk factors for spreading the infection.
- You must maintain contact with your doctor and provide the necessary samples.

If you have been issued with a rule of conduct that you believe to be wrong, you can request that your county medical infectious disease officer reviews it.

Special hygiene practices for those with risk factors

If you have risk factors, there is a higher risk of contaminating others. In such cases you should consider the following:

- Wash your hands thoroughly. Use your own towels and toiletries.
- Do not swim in a pool at the same time as others.
- Cover wounds with a dressing, and change the dressing if it soaks through.
- If you have a catheter, you should wear it under your clothes.
- Wash your hands after contact with wounds, dressings or catheters.

Infection tracing

According to the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act, you must participate in infection tracing. This means providing information to healthcare professionals so they can assess when, where and how you may have been infected and whether you may have infected others.

The information you provide is confidential (under professional secrecy) and the people you mention will not know who you are.

About the infection prevention sheet

The infection prevention sheet was produced by the Swedish Association of County Medical Officers, and is valid nationally.