

METHICILLIN RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA)

Information Sheet for Patients and Visitors

WHAT IS MRSA?

- When Staphylococcus aureus, a germ that usually lives harmlessly on the skin and mucous membranes of healthy people, develops resistance to certain antibiotics.
- Although usually harmless, occasionally it causes infection. The type of MRSA infection depends on the site infected, for example skin, bloodstream, or lung (pneumonia).
- It is possible for someone to carry MRSA but not be ill. This is called colonization and is different from infection.

HOW IS MRSA SPREAD?

- Direct skin-to-skin contact, usually on the hands of caregivers who have not washed their hands properly.
- Not spread through the air
- MRSA can live on hands and objects in the environment (towels, sheets and wound dressings etc)

HOW TO STOP THE SPREAD

- Single room accommodation (door can remain open)
- Long-sleeved gown and gloves worn by caregivers while in room
- Post signage on door to indicate special precautions needed
- Clean and disinfect the room and the equipment
- Everyone who leaves the room must clean their hands well and remove gowns and gloves
- Patient must wash hands before leaving the room

WHAT ABOUT FAMILY/VISITORS?

- Family and visitors should not assist other patients with their personal care as this may spread the germ.
- They may be required to wear a long-sleeved gown and gloves while in patient's room.
- Before leaving room, visitors must remove the gloves and gown and dispose of them in the garbage container and the linen hamper located in your room. Then they must clean their hands.

GOOD HAND HYGIENE PRACTICES:

- Remind all staff and visitors to practice proper hand hygiene before and after they touch the client.
- Ask your nurse or doctor to demonstrate proper hand hygiene techniques (15 seconds of soap and running water OR waterless alcohol hand rub until hands are dry).

You need to clean your hands:

- After using the bathroom
- After blowing your nose
- Before eating and drinking
- Before and after you touch your dressing or wounds
- When your hands are visibly dirty (soiled)
- Before you leave your room

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT HOME?

- If you have MRSA at the time of discharge from hospital, the chance of spreading the germ to your family is small. But, we do recommend that you practice the following:
 - Everyone who helps with your personal hygiene/going to the toilet should wash his or her hands after contact with you.
 - Everyone in the household should wash hands before preparing/eating food.
 - Everyone should wash hands well after using the toilet.
 - Clothing may be laundered in the same manner as the rest of the household laundry.
 - No special cleaning of furniture or items (e.g. dishes) in the home is required.
 - Inform physician, paramedics, nurses or other care providers that you have MRSA. This helps to prevent germs from spreading to others.

References: *Best Practices for Infection Prevention & Control of Resistant Staphylococcus aureus and Enterococci* December, 2006

Regional Infection Control Network: South Eastern Ontario Infection Control Network