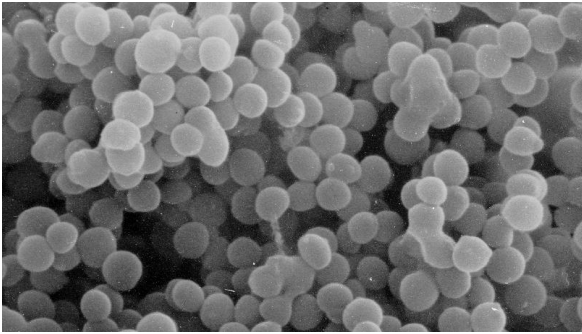


## What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacterium that commonly lives in the nose and on the skin. Usually it is harmless and not noticeable. Occasionally *Staphylococcus aureus* causes boils, wound infections or other infections.



Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a type of *Staphylococcus aureus* that is resistant to some antibiotics. It is no more likely to cause infection than an ordinary *Staphylococcus aureus* but if an infection occurs it is more difficult to treat.

An estimated 100,000 people in New Zealand carry MRSA on their body but it is less common in the Nelson-Marlborough region.

## How did I get MRSA?

The MRSA may have been on you before you came into hospital or you may have picked it up in hospital. It can live on your body for as short as an hour or for as long as many years.

MRSA is usually spread from person to person by direct skin-to-skin contact (e.g., shaking hands). It is possible that MRSA also spreads indirectly by contaminated objects (e.g., telephones) or surfaces (e.g., door handles.)

## What will happen to me now?

- Carrying MRSA on your body should not interfere with your medical or surgical treatment in any way or delay you being discharged from hospital
- You may be asked to move to a single room while you are in hospital
- An isolation sign will be hung on the door of your room
- Staff will wear gloves when they are touching you and in some situations also a gown or a mask. If you notice one of the staff is not wearing gloves then please point this out to him or her
- If you have any infected wounds, boils or areas of broken skin then they should be covered with a dressing
- If you have to leave the room (e.g., for an x-ray) cleanse your hands and make sure you put on an isolation tag.

## Can MRSA be treated?

If you have an infection caused by MRSA then you will be given antibiotics. If you are just a carrier of MRSA then in most cases you will not be offered any treatment because the MRSA will probably go away eventually by itself. We sometimes offer treatment to patients who are likely to be hospital for a long time or to repeatedly come back to hospital.

The treatment for those carrying MRSA includes ointment up your nose, showering with antiseptic bodywash, special antibiotic pills and cleaning of clothing, bedding and commonly touched surfaces in your room or home. Other members of the household may also be offered treatment.



## Can MRSA come back?

Occasionally MRSA can come back after treatment has stopped. If you come back into hospital in the future you will probably be asked to go into a single room again and swabs will be taken to look for MRSA.



## How will it affect my family and friends?

MRSA will not harm healthy people who visit you in hospital or who have contact with you at home.

Visitors should cleanse their hands with alcohol-based handgel or wash their hands with soap and water after visiting you and should not visit other people in the hospital after they have left your room. If you or your visitors are unsure, please discuss this with your nurse.

### For further information contact

- Your nurse or doctor
- The Infection Control Nurse Specialists, Nelson or Wairau Hospitals  
Phone (03) 546-1800
- Dr Richard Everts  
Infectious Diseases Specialist, Nelson Hospital
- Medlab South. Ph (03) 546-1632

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# MRSA

## Information for Patients and Visitors

