

Pre-surgery Screening for MRSA and MSSA

Information for patients, relatives and carers

① For more information, please contact:

Orthopaedic Pre-Assessment Team

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What are MRSA and MSSA?

Staphylococcus aureus is a type of bacteria that is carried by about a third of the population in their noses or on their skin. These people are classed as “carriers.” There are two main types: MRSA, short for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus aureus, and MSSA, short for Methicillin Sensitive Staphylococcus aureus.

MRSA is resistant to some antibiotics, but MSSA is responsive to many antibiotics.

Occasionally MRSA or MSSA can cause an infection. This may be a mild infection, such as a red, inflamed wound, but it may be more serious, such as septicaemia (infection of the blood). If a patient has an infection caused by either MRSA or MSSA it can be treated with antibiotics.

How is it spread?

The most common way for MRSA and MSSA to be spread is on hands. The single most important way of preventing the spread of these bacteria is by hand washing with soap and water or using alcohol gel.

MRSA and MSSA do not harm healthy people including pregnant women and children.

Why do you screen for MRSA and MSSA?

Infection can occur at any time, but you may be particularly vulnerable to infection if you are coming into hospital for an operation.

We can remain healthy as long as our skin (with no drips, drains or wounds) and our immune systems are intact.

However when patients have operations, germs can enter into the wound or site of catheters, drips and drains. This may create a potential risk of developing an infection.

Screening you before admission for surgery will enable us to identify if you are carrying the bacteria and provide you with treatment. This helps to reduce your risk of developing an infection at the site of your surgery (surgical wound infection)

Therefore for some operations / procedures we will swab parts of your body to look for MRSA and MSSA on your skin.

Swabs may be taken from your nose, throat, under your arms, groin, catheter sites and any wounds you may already have.

Swabs are sent to the laboratory to test if the bacteria are present.

Will I be told the results?

We will only contact you if you are found to carry MRSA or MSSA so that you can start treatment. If you do not carry them, we will not contact you.

What happens if you find MRSA or MSSA?

If the swabs show that MRSA or MSSA is present, do not worry. You are unlikely to come to any harm.

The treatment is simple and consists of a body wash and a nasal ointment, which you use daily for five days leading up to your surgery and five days afterwards.

Will my operation be cancelled if my swabs are positive?

It is very unlikely that your surgery will be cancelled if you have MSSA and have used the treatment provided before your surgery. If this has not been possible your surgeon will discuss the options with you and explain any risks in undergoing surgery.

If you have MRSA surgery may be cancelled until you have used treatment and had further swabs taken.

Can I refuse to have swabs taken?

Yes. It must be stressed however that swabbing is sometimes a routine part of treatment for many patients, and you may need to be swabbed as part of your care.

What will happen to the results?

All swab results are filed in your medical notes for current and future reference.

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope that you found this leaflet helpful. If you would like to tell us what you think, please contact: The Orthopaedic Pre-Assessment Team
York Hospital, Wigginton Road, York, YO31 8HE or telephone one of the numbers listed on the front cover.

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS offers impartial advice and assistance to patients, their relatives, friends and carers. We can listen to feedback (positive or negative), answer questions and help resolve any concerns about Trust services.

PALS can be contacted on 01904 726262, or email yhs-tr.patientexperienceteam@nhs.net

An answer phone is available out of hours.

Teaching, training and research

Our Trust is committed to teaching, training and research to support the development of health and healthcare in our community. Healthcare students may observe consultations for this purpose. You can opt out if you do not want students to observe. We may also ask you if you would like to be involved in our research.

Leaflets in alternative languages or formats

If you would like this information in a different format, including braille or easy read, or translated into a different language, please speak to a member of staff in the ward or department providing your care.

Patient Information Leaflets can be accessed via the Trust's Patient Information Leaflet website: www.yorkhospitals.nhs.uk/your-visit/patient-information-leaflets/

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