

Infection prevention and control

Information for patients about MRSA screening

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. Staphylococcus Aureus is a bacterium or germ found on about a third of the population, especially in the nose and throat and on the skin. MRSA is a variety of this germ that is resistant to a type of penicillin called Meticillin and some other antibiotics that are commonly used to treat infections.

When someone carries this germ, they are said to be 'colonised'. As long as MRSA stays in the nose and throat and on the skin it will cause no harm, but if it spreads to a wound or into your body through a break in the skin, it can cause an infection which is then difficult to treat. MRSA can easily spread to other vulnerable people. Because of this extra isolation measures are necessary. All patients will be routinely screened at or prior to a planned admission or procedure.

If you need information in a different format, such as easy read, large print, BSL, braille, email, SMS text or other communication support, please tell your ward or clinic nurse.

The Christie is committed to producing high quality, evidence based information for patients. Our patient information adheres to the principles and quality statements of the Information Standard. If you would like to have details about the sources used please contact the-christie.patient.information@nhs.net

For information and advice visit the cancer information centres at Withington, Oldham or Salford. Opening times can vary, please check before making a special journey.

Contact The Christie Hotline for urgent support and specialist advice
The Christie Hotline: 0161 446 3658
Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week



Testing for MRSA

People with a diagnosis of cancer are very vulnerable to infection and therefore all patients admitted to The Christie are tested for MRSA. This is so we can identify patients who may be carrying this germ and offer treatment to reduce or sometimes eradicate MRSA. This will then lessen the risk of the germ developing into an infection at a later date.

All patients coming in for surgery or other planned procedures will be screened on admission. Patients having surgery will be tested before their operation. The screening process consists of three swabs which are taken from the nose, throat and groin area. It is not painful and the result will normally be available in about 72 hours. In some circumstances, (patients admitted via the oncology assessment unit for example), patients may be prescribed treatment to use until their screening results are known.

What happens when MRSA is found?

When a patient in hospital is found to be 'colonised' (carrying MRSA), they will be informed by the nurse looking after them. They are then placed in a single room with their own hand-washing facilities and medical equipment. They will be prescribed treatment to reduce or sometimes eradicate the MRSA and be given instructions about how to use it. The doctors and nurses wear gloves and aprons whilst carrying out any care, and wash their hands thoroughly before and after any contact with them. The patient's environment is kept as clean as possible.

If you are screened as an outpatient and found to have MRSA, the infection prevention and control team will inform your consultant and your GP who will arrange for treatment to be prescribed for you to use.

Please see the separate leaflet 'Information for patients with MRSA' for more information.

How is MRSA spread?

It usually spreads by human contact and by invisible particles on equipment and furniture, but hands most easily transfer it.

Will MRSA affect visitors, family and friends?

MRSA is not a risk to healthy people and so we encourage patients to have visitors. Visitors should wash their hands carefully before leaving the room. Staff will advise them not to visit other patients on the ward whilst visiting you. Visitors do not need to wear gloves and aprons.

Who can I talk to about MRSA?

The infection prevention and control team will answer any questions and give further advice. Please phone **0161 446 3731**.