



MSSA screening

This leaflet is for patients, relatives and visitors and explains how and why we screen for Meticillin sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA).

What is MSSA?

MSSA stands for Meticillin sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus*.

MSSA is a common type of bacteria that can live harmlessly on the skin. Around 30 – 40% of people carry *Staphylococcus aureus* in their nose or on their skin, causing them no harm. MSSA is not normally a risk to healthy people and the majority of people who carry it do not have symptoms and are not aware they are carrying it. People who have MSSA in their nose or on their skin are said to be ‘colonised’.

Because people are more likely to get infections when they are already unwell or undergoing an operation, we need to know whether people have MSSA on their skin in order to ensure that appropriate treatment is given. Sometimes, MSSA can cause chronic wound infections, abscesses or boils, which may take a long time to heal and can sometimes lead to blood poisoning. However, we can treat this with antibiotics.

Why am I being screened for MSSA?

If we can find out who is carrying MSSA on their skin before or on admission to hospital, we can give them appropriate treatment to reduce the risk to them and other patients.



How will I be screened?

We can find out if you are carrying MSSA by taking a swab from the inside of your nose and throat. The test is painless and only takes a second or two. The results are not immediate as the swabs are processed in the laboratory so you may not find out the result for a few days or even weeks.

Sometimes, we may not be able to test all sites on your body immediately on admission and this may be done later during your stay. In these cases, initial results may be negative but this does not guarantee further tests on all sites on your body will be negative.

What if I have MSSA?

If you have been screened prior to an operation and are found to have MSSA on your body you will be given treatment to reduce the number of MSSA bacteria on your skin. This consists of special wash to clean your skin and hair, and cream for your nose. If you are at home waiting for your operation, you will also be advised to change both your clothes and bed linen every day for five days prior to your admission. This is the length of the treatment. Your nurse will give you a leaflet, which will inform you how to apply the wash and cream.

Can I have visitors?

MSSA does no harm to healthy people, including babies, children or pregnant women. It may affect people who have long-term conditions but, if you have any concerns, please ask your doctor or nurse for some more information. The most important thing you can do to protect yourself and your visitors, is for everyone to clean their hands with alcohol rub when they enter or leave the ward.

Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about MSSA screening, please ask your nurse for further information or you can contact the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust Infection Control team on 0118 322 6914, email: infection.control@royalberkshire.nhs.uk.

How do I find out more?

Thames Valley Health Protection Team Tel: 0344 225 3861 <https://www.gov.uk/health-protection-team>

United Kingdom Health Security Agency Website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-health-security-agency>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

Simon Wells, RBFT Infection Prevention & Control, November 2024

Next review due: November 2026