



MRSA and young children / babies

This leaflet is for the parents and carers of babies admitted to Buscot, the Neonatal Unit of the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust and explains how we test for MRSA, and what happens if your baby is diagnosed with it.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for Meticillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is a common type of bacteria (germ) that can live harmlessly on the skin but can sometimes cause a number of common infections, such as boils and wound infections.

Around 30% of people carry Staphylococcus aureus (SA) in their nose or on their skin, doing them no harm. SA is not normally a risk to healthy people and the majority of people who carry it do not have symptoms and aren't aware they are carrying it.

MRSA is a type of Staphylococcus aureus that has become resistant to Meticillin (a type of antibiotic) and to some other commonly used antibiotics. This means that the MRSA bacteria are not sensitive to commonly used antibiotics.

However, approximately 6% of adult patients and a smaller number of babies, children and young people coming to the hospital are colonised with MRSA. (They have MRSA on their skin or in their nose causing no harm to them.)

Because babies are more likely to get infections when they are already unwell or undergoing an operation, we need to be aware of those who have MRSA in order to ensure that appropriate treatment is given. Sometimes, MRSA can cause serious wound infections which take a long time to heal and can sometimes lead to blood poisoning. However, these can be treated with the correct antibiotics.

Why is my baby being screened for MRSA?

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

How will my baby be screened?

We can find out if your baby is carrying MRSA by taking a swab from the inside of their nose, throat and umbilicus (belly button) until it has healed. The test is painless and only takes a second or two.

The results are not immediate as the swabs are processed in the laboratory.

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

Screening is carried out on Buscot Ward when your baby is admitted, then weekly and again at discharge.

What if my baby has MRSA?

If your baby has MRSA, they may be given a bath with special lotion to reduce the number of germs on their skin.

Your baby may be nursed in a single room or with other children carrying MRSA on their skin. This is to minimise the risk of the bug spreading to other vulnerable babies. This will not affect the care your baby is given.

Questions and concerns

If you have any questions or concerns about MRSA 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?

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/mrsa/>

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