MRSA Screening
Inpatient Information
Why do I have to be screened?
The Department of Health have made it compulsory for all acute NHS trusts in England to screen all planned operations, some day case patient admissions and all emergency admissions for MRSA to help combat healthcare-associated infections in hospitals.

What is MRSA?
MRSA is an antibiotic resistant strain of a common bacteria called staphylococcus aureus. It stands for methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is commonly found on humans and often lives on your skin not causing you harm. It can sometimes cause a number of common infections. Usually having staphylococcus aureus in your nose or on your skin will not harm you as the bacterium is not normally a risk to healthy people.

People who carry it are not aware they do, and most of them will not have any symptoms. MRSA is a strain of staphylococcus aureus that can no longer be treated by methicillin (a type of antibiotic). However, we can still treat MRSA. It is estimated that around 7% of all patients who are admitted to hospital have the MRSA bacterium on their skin or in their nose already, even though they may feel well.

How is MRSA spread?
MRSA is mainly spread from person to person through hand contact. This is why washing your hands and using alcohol-based hand gels are so important. Good hand hygiene is one of the most important and effective ways of stopping the spread of MRSA.
What is screening and why is it being done?
MRSA screening involves testing all patients over the age of 16 who are admitted to this hospital so we can identify those patients who are already carrying this bacteria. MRSA is more likely to cause an infection in people who are unwell or who have wounds, such as those already in hospital.

This is why it’s so important to identify those people in a hospital who have MRSA on their body. It may help to prevent them from acquiring an infection due to the MRSA and from potentially spreading it to others. Also, if we can identify those patients who have MRSA on their body when they come into the hospital, we can make sure that they receive the best and most appropriate care and treatment for it.

What does screening mean?
Screening means that swabs will be taken from your nose and any other areas that the nurse thinks appropriate - usually wound sites, or anywhere the skin is broken. These swabs will be sent to the laboratory to be tested for MRSA and the results usually take three to four days. The nurse on the ward or the doctor will speak to you if your results come back as positive. If you have already been discharged, we will send your results to your GP.

What happens if you find MRSA in my sample?
MRSA can be treated. If you are found to be positive to MRSA, we may offer you treatment for it. Treatment may not always be appropriate for everybody but we will discuss this with you at the time. The treatment consists of a daily antibacterial body wash and the application of an antibacterial nasal cream. This will continue for five days and then you will have a rest period of no treatment for two days and then have another MRSA screen taken. Your nurse or doctor will explain your treatment and discuss the most appropriate care with you. If you are an inpatient in the hospital with MRSA we will usually care for you separately from other patients in a side room or in a bay with people with the same type of infection. Your MRSA positive status will not prevent you from being discharged as you will be able to continue your treatment at home.
Infection Prevention and Control Team
Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital
Aldermaston Road
Basingstoke
Hampshire
RG24 9NA

01256 473202

www.northhampshire.nhs.uk