

# MRSA at Children's

*The basics of MRSA germ control on the units, clinics and in the ED*

## What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. This type of bacteria does not respond to treatment with common drugs.

## What does antibiotic resistance mean?

Germ called bacteria may cause infections. Antibiotics are drugs used to treat infections caused by these bacteria. Sometimes, some of these drugs will no longer kill the germs. This is called antibiotic drug resistance.

## What is *Staphylococcus aureus*?

*Staphylococcus aureus*, or *Staph aureus* for short, is a germ usually found on a person's skin and mucous membranes. It may cause infections on broken skin or wounds. Methicillin is a type of antibiotic used to treat infections caused by *Staph aureus*. If *Staph aureus* is resistant to methicillin, it is called methicillin-resistant *Staph aureus* (MRSA). This means that the infection may be more difficult to treat.

## How did you find out my child has MRSA?

MRSA is increasing in our community, so we have more and more children who test positive for this germ. At Children's, we test all babies and children placed in our Intensive Care Units for MRSA. Also, your child's care provider may request a test at any time if there is a concern about MRSA.

## Will my child always have MRSA?

Most MRSA infections can be treated with medicine and proper skin care. Over time, your child's normal skin organisms may take the place of MRSA. Your child will no longer have to be isolated during a hospital stay when tests are negative for MRSA. However, your child may carry MRSA for a long time.

## What does this mean when my child is hospitalized?

Most people who carry MRSA are healthy. If MRSA is passed to sick children or to those with an open wound from surgery, those children can get a more serious infection that may be harder to treat. For this reason, a child who has MRSA is placed in "isolation." The staff at Children's will use the following precautions when caring for your child:

- Children with MRSA or other contagious infections are generally placed in a single room.
- A card is placed on the door alerting everyone of the precautions needed to enter your child's hospital room.
- All staff will wear gloves and gowns when entering your child's room. Since this germ is spread by person-to-person contact or touch, not through the air (as by coughing), **we usually do not need to wear masks.**

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- All staff will pay careful attention to cleaning their hands. This is important after touching the patient or anything in contact with the patient, such as bedding, clothes and toys.
- Parents are not asked to wear gowns and gloves because of your unique interaction and exposure history with your child. They should, however, wash their hands well before using public areas such as restrooms and the cafeteria.
- For the safety of other patients, we ask that your child not use the waiting room play areas during your visit. Ask the front desk for coloring pages while you wait.
- In the Emergency Department, since we are often full, sometimes a MRSA-positive child is put in one of our larger exam rooms with another family. We have a specific policy for exam room sharing that keeps children at a safe distance from each other (at least three feet) to reduce exposure to germs.

### We ask you and your child to:

- Avoid using the Playroom and Teen Zone, where you would come into close contact with patients staying on the hospital units.
- Talk to your nurse about time for your child outside the patient room.

### What about visitors to the hospital?

Visitors will be asked to wear gowns and gloves when entering your child's hospital room and to wash their hands thoroughly when leaving the room. Visitors are less likely to already be exposed to the infection we are trying to isolate the child for. This is our practice for managing all infectious germs. Sick or immune-suppressed people should not visit the hospital.

### What about our clinic and ER visits?

Because the type of care your child receives in the clinics is different from hospital care, we may not need to wear gowns when seeing your child. In clinic, a child is likely to leave on more clothing and the staff have less contact with body substances like urine and feces. This affects our infection-control measures. We will still be very careful not to spread MRSA to other patients.

- We will try to get your child into the exam room as soon as possible to decrease contact with others in the waiting room.

#### TO LEARN MORE

- Infection Control (206) 987-5193
- Your Child's Health Care Provider
- See the Seattle King County Public Health Fact Sheet for Patients and the Public on Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* rev. 5/6/04 on the Web at [www.metrokc.gov](http://www.metrokc.gov)
- Look at the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) Web site [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

*Children's will make this information available in alternate formats upon request. Please call Marketing Communications at (206) 987-5205.*

*This handout has been reviewed by clinical staff at Children's Hospital. However, your child's needs are unique. Before you act or rely upon this information, please talk with your child's health care provider.*