



Prevent the spread of MRSA WASH YOUR HANDS

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Good hand hygiene is one of the single most effective
measures for preventing the spread of infection.

Our hands move germs from one place to another. By
hand washing, we remove transient micro-organisms
acquired through recent contact with infected patients,
or the environment.

Hand washing protects everyone!

Six easy steps to clean hands...

Before you begin, wet your hands under warm running
water, apply soap, and then follow the six steps,
rubbing the hands together quickly and firmly for
around 15 seconds.

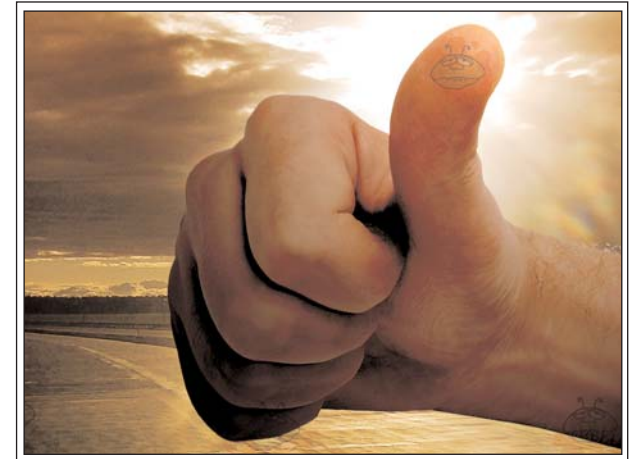
1. Rub palm-to-palm.
2. Rub the back of both hands (right palm over left
back, and then vice versa).
3. Rub palm-to-palm interlacing the fingers.
4. Rub the backs of fingers by interlocking the hands.
5. Rub the thumbs (rotational rubbing of right thumb
clasped in the left palm, and then vice versa).
6. Rub palms with fingertips (rotational rubbing of right
fingers on left palm, and then vice versa).

A thorough 15-second hand wash could save lives!

This content is not intended nor does it replace individual professional
advice. Please contact a healthcare professional or seek advice from
NHS Direct (0845 46 47) NHS Direct Wales (0845 46 47) or NHS 24 in
Scotland (08454 24 24 24).



THE HITCHER



**MRSA is usually passed
on by human contact,
particularly by people's
hands.**

**If you come into contact with
MRSA, and do not wash your
hands thoroughly, then MRSA
can 'hitch a ride' to the next
person.**



MRSA FACTS

Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is a strain of bacteria which has developed resistance to certain antibiotics. MRSA poses a severe threat to vulnerable patients, such as the elderly, the very young, the immunocompromised and the very sick.

Transmission

Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium commonly found on the skin of about one in three people; however, in certain circumstances, it can cause infection. Certain strains of the bacterium have developed resistance to some of the antibiotics usually given to treat them, specifically flucloxacillin. In laboratories, methicillin has been used to identify meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA). More recently, oxacillin has replaced methicillin in the laboratory, hence the name change.

MRSA is more commonly found in hospitals or care settings and can be transmitted from person-to-person via direct contact with the bacteria. It is known to spread on the hands of healthcare workers, equipment and the environment.

Incubation

The incubation period for MRSA is variable.

Illness

MRSA does not normally pose a threat to healthy individuals who may carry the bacteria without being aware of it. MRSA is a problem however, if it colonises a vulnerable patient, where it can then cause an infection.

People at greater risk from MRSA infection include the elderly, the very young, the immunocompromised, and the very sick. The symptoms produced vary depending on the infection but they can range from boils or wound infections to bacteraemia and septicemia.

Treatment

Treatment of MRSA can be more difficult than the treatment required for meticillin-sensitive strains of *Staphylococcus aureus* (MSSA). This is because it can be resistant to the antibiotics that would usually be used to treat the infection.

Current guidelines have been written by a multi-disciplinary group and these provide information and recommendations on current practice on the:

- screening of patients and staff
- decolonisation treatment
- patient management
- surveillance.

Exclusion

In hospital, patients who are colonised and/or infected with MRSA may be managed in single room accommodation with en-suite facilities until the bacterium has been eradicated using decolonisation treatment. Standard precautions and contact infection control precautions should be followed.

Within community settings, a risk assessment should be undertaken to identify individual patient's clinical needs to ensure that a 'normal' life can be followed. Standard infection control precautions should be followed with all patients. Refer to your local policy for further guidance.

Notification

Meticillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* is not a notifiable disease; however, there is a mandatory surveillance programme underway.

Complications

MRSA is no more virulent than standard strains of *Staphylococcus aureus*, however, it can cause complications due to the fact that it can be more resistant to antibiotics. It can lead to serious complications if the bacteria cannot be eradicated.

Prevention

To reduce the risk of drug-resistant strains of bacteria developing, prudent use of antibiotics should be advocated. Thorough hand washing and standard infection control procedures should also be carried out to help prevent the spread of the bacteria.