**How do I stop the spread of MRSA?**

1. Wash hands with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rubs often. Insist that others wash often, especially those caring for you.
2. Keep wounds and sores covered with clean, dry bandages. Soiled dressings should be placed in a plastic bag and placed in the regular trash.
3. Do not share personal items: razors, towels, washcloths, clothing or uniforms.
5. Avoid skin-to-skin contact until any sores are healed.
6. See your doctor if you think you have a skin infection and follow his/her instructions on care and treatment. Take all medications as prescribed.
7. Tell your health care provider if you have had a MRSA infection or colonization in the past.

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**What is MRSA?**
MRSA is a germ, *Staphylococcus aureus*, which does not respond to some antibiotics. It is sometimes called a "super bug". This means that the infection may be more difficult to treat.

**MRSA colonization**
MRSA Colonization is MRSA that is **without** signs or symptoms of illness or infection. The most common areas for colonization are the nose, underarms, wounds that don't heal, groin, feeding tubes, breathing tube sites, in sputum or in urine.

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*Developed for our patients by The Infection Control Professionals of INTEGRIS Health, September 2007*
Who is at risk for MRSA?
Some people are at greater risk of having MRSA colonization or infection than others.
1. Patients in ICU.
2. Patients who have been in the hospital for a long time.
3. Those who are sick for a long time.
4. People living in nursing homes, prisons, or other cramped spaces.
5. People who are on dialysis.
6. Illegal IV drug users.
7. Patients with open draining sores, feeding tubes, breathing tubes, and central lines (an IV that is placed in the upper chest when IV access in the arms is not possible), or urinary catheters (a tube in the bladder to drain urine) may be tested to rule out MRSA infection or colonization.
8. Persons who participate in contact sports or use gym facilities.

How do I know if I have MRSA colonization?
A swab of the inside of the nose can determine MRSA colonization. The swab is sent to the lab for testing. This testing takes about 24 hours.

Why am I being tested for MRSA colonization?
If a person in the hospital is colonized with MRSA the germs can be spread to other patients. When hospital staff know a patient has MRSA, they can take special precautions to prevent it from spreading.

Will I be treated for MRSA colonization?
No. Treatment for colonization is usually not recommended.

What are other terms for colonization?
Another term for colonization is carrier or reservoir.
1. Carriers are those colonized or infected with MRSA. Hand-washing prevents the spread of germs.
2. Reservoirs are surfaces, such as tables, light switches, and door knobs. These areas should be cleaned often to prevent the spread of germs.

Why am I in isolation?
All patients who have a positive test for MRSA are placed in isolation. Isolation is used to keep MRSA from spreading to other patients. Therefore, each time you return to the hospital you will be placed in isolation.

What is isolation?
Isolation alerts staff and visitors that special precautions are to be taken when entering the room to prevent the spread of germs. Outside the room there will be a sign and a cart with isolation supplies such as gloves, gowns, and masks. We do this to keep germs from spreading to others.

Am I contagious? Is my family at risk?
Touching infected or colonized parts of the body is how MRSA is spread. You can leave the germs on anything you touch if you do not clean your hands. You may still touch family members as long as you remember that hands should be washed with soap and water for at least 15 seconds or cleaned with alcohol-based cleaner often, and after touching wounds, dressings, using the toilet, coughing or blowing your nose.

Will I need to be in isolation at home?
At home, in most cases, you only need to use good hand washing. Healthy family members, who do not have open wounds, skin diseases, or diabetes, are not likely to get MRSA.

What is the difference between MRSA colonization and MRSA infection?
MRSA colonization is present in or on a body site without signs and symptoms of infection. MRSA infection is an infection of a body site with signs and symptoms of infection.

Signs and symptoms of MRSA infection:
1. Fever.
2. Sores that are not getting better.
3. Sores that are draining.
4. Heat in the area of the sore.
5. Pain.
6. It may start out looking like an insect bite, spider bite or pimple. You can also get MRSA in the form of pneumonia (in your lungs), urinary tract infection (in your bladder or kidneys), surgery site infection, or blood infection.

Treatment of MRSA infection:
Treatment for MRSA infection will be directed by your physician or health care provider.

Visitors:
Please wash your hands or use alcohol hand cleaner before leaving the Isolation room.