

How to use your methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) screen postal kit

Pre-operative Assessment

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Introduction

Please ensure you complete your MRSA swabs and that this is returned to the pre-op department or your GP surgery as soon as you possibly can.

This information leaflet is for people who need screening for MRSA before they come into hospital for an operation or other procedure. If you have received this information, then you need to provide an MRSA sample, otherwise your procedure will not go ahead on the planned date.

Please read all the instructions carefully before taking your swabs. If you have difficulty with this, ask someone to help you.

Why do I need to have an MRSA swab?

MRSA is a type of bacteria that is resistant to several antibiotics, which means it is harder to treat than other bacterial infections.

MRSA lives harmlessly on the skin of around one in 30 people, usually in the nose, armpits or groin, without causing any symptoms. This is known as 'colonisation' or 'carrying' MRSA, and it is nothing to be alarmed about.

Getting MRSA on your skin will not make you ill, but it could cause an infection if it gets deeper within your body. People coming into hospital are more at risk of this happening because:

- they often have a way for bacteria to get into their body, e.g. a wound, an intravenous drip in a vein or a urinary catheter.
- they may have other serious health problems that mean their body is less able to fight an infection.

Healthy people are not usually at risk of MRSA infections.

It is important to know whether you are carrying MRSA so that we can reduce your risk of getting an infection or spreading the bacteria to others.

If your MRSA swabs are positive for the germ, you will require topical treatment. This will reduce the number of MRSA bacteria before your operation or procedure and will help to reduce complications related to a possible MRSA infection whilst you are recovering.

This treatment is painless and usually well tolerated.

Why do I need to screen myself at home?

You have been asked to complete your own MRSA screen so that you do not have to make another visit to the hospital.

What equipment should I be given?

You will have been provided with a screening pack which contains the following items:

- Two separately wrapped swab packs, each containing a black-tipped swab stick and black-capped plastic tube.
- One microbiology test form. This has already been partially completed for you and attached to your return plastic sample bag.
- Patient stickers with your personal details to label the swab containers.
- A plastic sample bag to put your completed swabs in.



How to complete your MRSA swabs

Please make sure you have a clean, dry surface for your swabs and equipment.

Nose swabs:

- Begin by washing your hands thoroughly.
- Carefully peel down the outer packaging of the swab and remove the plastic tube inside.



- Attach a barcoded sticker to the plastic tube.



- Break the seal on the tube by twisting the cap and removing it.



- Carefully remove the cotton swab from the packet using the black handle. Please note: when removing the swab, it is important that you do not touch the length of the swab or the cotton wool tip. You must only use the black handle.
- Dip the swab into the sterile tube, making sure the swab enters the charcoal at the bottom of the tube. Do not seal the tube.



- Gently swirl the swab around the inside of one nostril five to six times using a rotating action. Using the same swab, repeat this inside the other nostril.
- Place the swab inside the tube, making sure not to touch the length or end of the swab.
- Firmly push the swab in place until the black cap is secure.

Groin swabs:

- Make sure your hands are clean.
- Repeat the process described above in steps two to six.
- Holding the black handle, gently run the swab against both sides of your groin (the folds of skin on the inside of the top of your thighs), ensuring the swab does not touch your clothing. As before, use one swab for both sides of your groin.
- Place the swab inside the tube, making sure not to touch the length or end of the swab.
- Firmly push the swab in place until the black cap is secure

To complete the process:

- Please complete the date and time you took your swab on the request form attached to the front of the plastic bag.
- Next, place both of the swab tubes into the plastic bag provided, sealing it by removing the red protective strip.



- Wash your hands when you have finished.

What do I do with my swabs now?

Please return your completed swabs to the pre-op assessment department or your GP surgery as soon as possible.

When will I hear about the results of my swabs?

We will not contact you if your MRSA swab is negative as no further action is required. We will also inform your GP, who will then contact you to organise your treatment.

What treatment will I need if I am MRSA positive?

You will need antiseptic treatment for MRSA to help prevent wound infections by removing MRSA from your skin (known as 'decolonisation'). This usually involves:

- Applying antibacterial cream inside your nose three times a day for five days.
- Washing with an antibacterial wash/shampoo every day for five days.
- Changing your towel, clothes and bedding every day during treatment.

If your MRSA swab result finds that you are carrying MRSA, you will be contacted and advised about your treatment – a positive result may delay your planned surgery date.

Further information

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this

leaflet, please contact:

Pre-Assessment Team on:

Lincoln 01522 573595

Boston 01205 333579

Grantham 01476 858350

Louth please contact either Lincoln or Boston

References

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet please email patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk

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If you require this information in another language, large print, audio (CD or tape) or braille, please email the Patient Information team at patient.information@ulh.nhs.uk