

## Brief info about MRSA for patients und their relatives

**MRSA** stands for Meticillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus. Staphylococcus aureus is a bacterium that can be found on the skin and mucous membrane of many people, but mostly often in the nose and throat. This occurrence is called colonization and is considered normal. However, Staphylococcus aureus can cause infections under certain circumstances. In normal everyday life, these are for example furuncles or paronychia. In hospitals and other healthcare settings, however, we have to do with immuno-compromised people with multiple diseases who are more vulnerable to infections. There the bacteria can lead to a wound infection or to the infection of the urinary or respiratory tract or even to blood poisoning, particularly in patients who have recently had surgery, mechanical ventilation or infusions.

Infections caused by Staphylococcus aureus are usually well treatable. In the hospital setting, however, some of these bacteria have become resistant to antibiotics such as for example methicillin ("methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus"). If Staphylococcus aureus has become resistant to methicillin, many other commonly used antibiotics will not work against these bacteria either; this is called „multi-resistance“. These multi-resistant MRSA-bacteria are often seen in patients in medical facilities.

Infections caused by MRSA can then only be treated with special antibiotics (so-called „drugs of last resort“) that have certain disadvantages.

The infections are spread through the hands of the patient/resident or of the nursing or medical staff or through items (e.g., clothing) that have been contaminated with the bacterium. Therefore, in medical facilities, extensive hygienic measures are maintained to prevent further spread.

Outside medical facilities, a spread is hardly been observed since we are dealing there with mostly healthy people in whom Staphylococcus aureus - whether with or without resistance - is not a particular problem.

The hygiene regulations in MRSA positive cases are used to protect other residents and patients without this pathogen.

The individual measures depend on whether and to what extent diseased or immuno-compromised persons are present in the facilities:

In **hospitals**, strict hygiene regulations are used:

isolation of affected patients, equipping the staff with overalls, gloves and masks covering the mouth and nose area („disguise“) to prevent contamination with MRSA and a subsequent transmission to other patients. Relatives and visitors should contact the clinic staff to be instructed on required measures.

In **nursing homes**, protective measures are significantly less restrictive. Useful measures are for example a frequent linen change for affected residents and a regular disinfection of hands (including patient's visitors). No isolation is normally required.

**At home**, normal hygiene measures are sufficient. However, these are to be maintained by all persons, that is, by the person affected but also by relatives, carers, etc. The measures include:

- Regular hand washing (no hand disinfection is needed)
- Changing of linen and underwear, washing of underwear, linen, pajamas and towels at least at 60°C (higher temperatures are even better)
- Dishwashing possibly in the dishwasher at 65°C.

There are no restrictions with regard to the private contact to other people. Special precautions are only to be taken with people who work in health care facilities or who have open wounds or skin diseases (e.g., eczema) or who are seriously ill or who will soon be hospitalized. In those cases, please contact us at the address specified in the imprint.

Please understand that outpatient care services and doctors take additional hygiene measures when visiting patients at home, since they also take care of other

patients and therefore must be protected from contamination with MRSA.

If you know that you are a MRSA-carrier, please always point it out when you visit a medical facility (e.g., a GP, a nursing home, a hospital, etc.).

Most MRSA positive persons are just colonized with this bacterium and are not infected. In such cases, it is generally possible to remove the germ with antibiotic or antiseptic substances. This procedure is called **sanitation** and includes different measures that could be quite stressful for the affected person and that sometimes do not lead to desired results. In addition, it cannot currently be guaranteed that

the procedure will be covered by health insurance. It would therefore be advisable to clarify the necessity and possible implementation ways of such a procedure together with the GP, the affected person and possibly with the nursing staff.

**More detailed information** can be found in the document „Information about MRSA for patients und their relatives” which is available at <http://www.mrsa-netzwerke.niedersachsen.de>

Imprint:

**MRSA-networks in Lower Saxony**

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