

NIH Clinical Center Patient Education Materials

MRSA/ORSA (Methicillin/Oxacillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

What is MRSA/ORSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, or “staph,” is a bacterium normally found on our skin and in our respiratory tract. Staph can be on our bodies normally without causing infection (called “colonization”), but it can also cause infection. MRSA stands for “Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*,” and ORSA stands for “Oxacillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.” MRSA and ORSA are staph bacteria that are resistant to the antibiotic medicines (methicillin and oxacillin) commonly used to treat staph infections. Unlike normal staph, these bacteria are resistant to common treatments, so they are infections that are very hard to treat. For more information about MRSA, please visit

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/antimicrobialresistance/examples/mrsa/pages/default.aspx>. For more

information about antibiotic-resistant bacteria, please visit

<http://www.niaid.nih.gov/topics/antimicrobialresistance/Pages/default.aspx>.

How can someone get MRSA/ORSA?

You can get MRSA/ORSA in the community or in a hospital from someone else with MRSA/ORSA. It is spread by close contact with a person with MRSA/ORSA or by touching objects in your surroundings with MRSA/ORSA on them. You can also get MRSA/ORSA if the normal staph bacteria on your skin become resistant to the antibiotics that you are taking.

How does the Clinical Center test for MRSA/ORSA?

- If you have MRSA/ORSA, MRSA/ORSA may grow and be visible in your cultures when lab tests are done.
- To find out if you are colonized with MRSA/ORSA in your respiratory tract, your nose will be swabbed. This test is not painful and may be repeated while you are at the hospital. A medical staff member must perform this test; you cannot perform this test yourself.

Important things to know

- Read “Patient Information—Hand hygiene.”
- Read “Patient Information—Contact isolation.”

Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is the most important way to prevent the spread of germs, including antibiotic-resistant bacteria. Wash your hands with soap and water or use alcohol hand rub often. Ask your care providers and visitors to wash their hands frequently.

Patients

- Isolation
 - If you have MRSA/ORSA, then you will be on contact isolation at the hospital to stop your MRSA/ORSA from accidentally spreading to other people.
 - You must follow the directions given in the “Patient Information—Hand hygiene” and “Patient Information—Contact isolation” information sheets.

- Gowns and Gloves
Staff will wear a gown and gloves when they are in your room.

Family and visitors

All visitors must follow the directions given in the “Patient Information—Hand hygiene” and “Patient Information—Contact isolation” information sheets.

How do I get rid of MRSA/ORSA?

- If you have MRSA/ORSA, then the doctor will treat it. If you are colonized with MRSA/ORSA, and not infected by it, then it may go away without treatment.
- MRSA/ORSA on hands can be removed by good hand hygiene.
- MRSA/ORSA on objects in your surroundings can be killed by cleaning with disinfectant.

When will isolation end?

- You will be on isolation until your MRSA/ORSA infection is fully treated and not able to spread to others by accident. Your care provider will tell you when your isolation ends.
- You will be on isolation as an inpatient and outpatient until the Hospital Epidemiology Service determines that isolation is no longer needed.
- Isolation does not determine the length of your hospital stay.

Questions?

Ask your nurse or doctor, or call the Hospital Epidemiology Service at 301-496-2209. For more information visit the NIH Clinical Center’s Patient Portal:

http://patientportal.cc.nih.gov/pt_care/patient_infection_control.shtml

This information is prepared specifically for persons taking part in clinical research at the National Institutes of Health Clinical Center and may not apply to patients elsewhere. If you have questions about the information presented here, talk to a member of your health care team.

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Questions about the NIH Clinical Center?

<http://www.cc.nih.gov/comments.shtml>

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