

## Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) Testing

California state law now requires hospitals to test some patients for a germ called MRSA.

### ? What is MRSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus* (pronounced staff-ill-oh-KOK-us AW-ree-us) or “staph” is a common germ that about 1 out of every 3 people normally have on the skin or in the nose without it causing any problem. MRSA is a type of staph that is not killed by penicillin or similar antibiotics, the drugs most commonly used to treat staph infections.

### ? What does the result of this test mean?

If the test is positive, it means that at the moment your child’s nose was swabbed, MRSA was present. Your child is considered “colonized” with MRSA. If the test is negative, it means that your child is not “colonized” with MRSA.

### ? What does “colonized” mean?

If your child is colonized with a germ, it means that the germ is on his/her body. In most cases, it does not make him/her sick.

### ? What is the difference between being colonized and having an infection?

If your child has an infection, s/he is usually sick and his/her doctor will give you a treatment of some kind for the infection. If s/he is only colonized, s/he is not sick and no treatment is necessary.

### ? What should I do if I am told that my child’s test is positive?

Carry on with your child’s daily life as usual. A positive test means that your child has MRSA on his/her skin. It is one of many germs that can be found on normally on human skin. If his/her test is positive, there are simple things listed below that you can do to help prevent MRSA from causing problems.

### ? What are some things that hospitals are doing to prevent MRSA infections?

To prevent MRSA infections, doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers:

- **Clean their hands** with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after caring for every patient.
- **Clean hospital rooms** and medical equipment.

### ? What can I do to prevent infections including MRSA?

Infections are caused by germs entering your child’s body through an opening in the skin (such as a cut or scrape) or through your child’s mucous membranes (eyes, nose, mouth). Clean hands and a clean environment are the key to preventing the spread of germs in any environment. These few simple things will help prevent infections with most germs.

#### In the hospital:

- Watch for hand hygiene and remind doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers to clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before touching your child or the things in his/her room.  
**If you do not see your child’s providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.**
- Ask visitors to clean their hands when they enter your room and before they leave.

#### At home:

- Clean your child’s hands regularly (before he/she eats, before preparing food and after using the bathroom).
- If your child has wounds or an IV (such as a catheter or port), make sure that you know how to take care of them.
  - Clean your hands often, especially before and after changing your dressing or bandage. People who live with your child should clean their hands often as well.
  - Keep any wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Routinely clean the surfaces your child touches frequently, such as faucets, doorknobs, remote control, keyboard, telephone, chair/couch arms, kitchen surfaces. Use a commercial wipe or soap and water.

### ? What should I do if my child has an infection?

Routine cleaning of your child’s hands and his/her environment is the best way to prevent the spread of the infection to others. Your child’s doctor or nurse will answer other questions you may have.

**Remember: Not all infections are caused by MRSA.**

**Thank you for reminding our staff to clean their hands!**

Department of Hospital Epidemiology and Infection Prevention and Control 415-353-4343