

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 nose was swabbed, MRSA was present. You are considered “colonized” with MRSA. If the test is negative, it means that you are not “colonized” with MRSA.

? What does “colonized” mean?

If you are colonized with a germ, it means that the germ is on your body. In most cases, it does not make you sick.

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

If you have an infection, you are usually sick and your doctor will give you a treatment of some kind for the infection. If you are only colonized, you are not sick and no treatment is necessary.

? What should I do if I am told that my test is positive?

Carry on with your daily life as usual. A positive test means that you have MRSA on your skin. It is one of many germs that can be found on normally on human skin. If your test is positive, there are simple things listed below that you can do to help prevent MRSA from causing you 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 body through an opening in your skin (such as a cut or scrape) or through your 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 you or the things in your room.
If you do not see your providers clean their hands, please ask them to do so.
- Ask your visitors to clean their hands when they enter your room and before they leave.

At home:

- Clean your hands regularly (before you eat, before preparing food and after using the bathroom).
- If you have 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 you should clean their hands often as well.
 - Keep any wounds clean and change bandages as instructed until healed.
- Routinely clean the surfaces you touch 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 I have an infection?

Routine cleaning of your hands and your environment is the best way to prevent the spread of your infection to others. Your 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!

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