

MRSA screening

What is MRSA?

MRSA is short for Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. This bacterium is a variant of *Staphylococcus aureus* **which has become resistant to multiple conventional antibiotics. In other words, the bacterium is resistant.**

Is MRSA dangerous?

'Ordinary' *Staphylococcus aureus* is a common bacterium. On average, 30% of the population carries this regularly in the nose and on the skin. This does not have any symptoms at all. In people with a greatly reduced immune system, the bacterium can cause infections, which can lead to an abscess but also to septicemia or pneumonia. Normally, the infection is then treated with antibiotics. However, if a bacterium is resistant to many antibiotics (such as is the case with MRSA), the treatment is somewhat more difficult.

Because almost all patients who are in a hospital have a reduced resistance, we want to keep these bacteria outside the walls of the hospital.

Can I catch an MRSA infection?

MRSA is very rare in the Netherlands. In other countries, including countries in Europe, MRSA is much more common and hospitals are greatly hindered by it. There is, therefore, more chance that you may get MRSA if you have been in a foreign hospital. MRSA is increasingly found on farms with intensive cattle farming in the Netherlands. This is

because farmers use a lot of antibiotics for the animals.

What measures are being taken?

There are many patients together in close quarters in the hospital; this increases the chances of bacteria spreading. In addition, sick people have a reduced resistance and this makes them much more susceptible to infections. During an admission or a treatment, additional measures are taken to prevent the possible spread of MRSA. Employees wear protective clothing. If you are an MRSA carrier or a suspected MRSA carrier, you will be in a private room during your hospitalization.

How is it checked to see if I have MRSA?

Prior to your admission or treatment, you will be asked questions to determine whether you run an increased risk of an MRSA infection. If this is the case, you will be tested to see if you do indeed have the MRSA bacteria.

To assess this, cultures are taken from the nose, throat, perineum (skin around the anus) and any wounds you may have. In some cases, a urine or sputum culture is also necessary. Taking the cultures is not painful. After about five days, it will be known whether or not you carry MRSA. If you are an MRSA carrier, you will be informed by your consulting physician. If it appears that you are not an MRSA carrier, you will not be notified. If treatment for MRSA is necessary, the doctor will discuss this with you.

Notes on this leaflet

If any information in this leaflet is unclear or incomplete, please notify us. You can share your remarks with us via voorlichting@zha.nl.