

MRSA Prevention Initiative: *Getting To Zero*

The **VAMC-Fayetteville, Arkansas** has partnered with the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) and the Veterans Healthcare Association (VHA) to reduce/prevent the spread of multi drug-resistant organisms (MDROs – bacteria that are resistant to more than one antibiotic/drug)—and **we're starting with Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)**, a bacteria which is commonly called “staph” and is resistant to certain types of antibiotics.

Who gets MRSA infections?

Anyone can get an MRSA infection but the risk is greatest among people with weakened immune systems who are treated in the health care system, such as hospitals.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA is mainly spread by direct physical contact with a person or object that carries the bacteria, such as equipment that is shared by more than one patient. In the hospital setting, the most common source of spread is the healthcare worker's hands.

How is MRSA infection diagnosed?

Most often, a culture is obtained from the infection site and sent to the Laboratory. If MRSA is found, the patient's doctor will decide what antibiotic treatment is best using the lab data to find the drugs that are most effective against the infection.

Why is MRSA prevention intervention important?

MRSA is the cause of for 100,000 U.S. hospitalizations each year and has been a growing problem for more than 20 years. MRSA infections can increase the length of the hospital stay and the chance of getting other infections.

What is an MRSA “Bundle?”

As a result of a study lead by the Pittsburg VA Hospital, an "MRSA Bundle" strategy was developed and shared with the other VA Medical Centers to reduce/prevent the spread of MRSA while in the hospital. The MRSA Bundle includes:

- Active surveillance which means swabbing the patient's nasal passage to find out if MRSA is present.
- Proper Hand Hygiene before and after patient contact.
- Contact Precautions for those who are sick from MRSA or who carry it.
- Careful cleaning of high and low touch areas.
- Education for staff, patients, family members, and visitors.

Using the MRSA Bundles, what can a patient expect during their hospital stay?

For this plan to be successful, we will need to obtain a nares (nose) swab upon admission and discharge to test for MRSA. If the culture shows MRSA, patients will be placed in Contact Precautions.

What should you expect with Contact Precautions?

- A sign will be placed on your hospital room door saying "Contact Precautions" so that staff and visitors will know that they need to use extra measures while caring for you.
- Everyone (healthcare workers, families, and visitors) who enters your room should wash their hands or use the alcohol foam and then wear a cover gown and gloves.
- Contact Precautions will be used until you leave the hospital and upon any future admissions unless nasal cultures show you no longer have the MRSA in your nose.
- You will be encouraged to remain in your room but you are not confined to your room. If you leave your room, be sure to wash your hands or use the alcohol foam, be sure any wounds are covered, and that you have clean pajamas and robe.
- These precautions are to improve patient safety and are vital to help prevent the spread of MRSA to other patients and to

healthcare staff. Your cooperation is appreciated. Please ask questions if you do not understand or need more information.

What can family members and visitors do to help make this plan successful?

- Use good hand hygiene—hand washing or the alcohol-based hand foam—often.
- Wear the proper protective equipment, such as gloves and a gown after hand hygiene and before going into the patient's room.
- Ask questions! We're here to serve our Veterans' best interests and education is a great way to do that.

What should you do at home if MRSA has been found in your nose?

When you leave the hospital, you still need to take special care to prevent spreading the MRSA bacteria from your nose to other people.

- You may pursue your normal activity, but wash your hands often, especially after touching your nose.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough.
- Throw the tissue in a waste basket and then wash your hands.
- If you have had an infection with MRSA in the past and you think the infection is back, see a doctor as soon as you can and tell the doctors and nurses that you have had MRSA in the past.

It takes everyone's help to make it work!

This brochure was developed by Infection Control using multiple web sites for information regarding MRSA and its transmission. For additional information regarding MRSA, contact the Infection Control Practitioner at (479) 443-4301, extension 5612 or go to the CDC web site at <http://www.cdc.gov>.

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Veterans Health Care System of the Ozarks

MRSA* Prevention Initiative



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* MRSA is Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.