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MRSA Screening - Information for Pregnant Women
Obstetrics/Midwifery
Patient Information Leaflet

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What is MRSA?

MRSA is often referred to in the media as the "hospital superbug". MRSA stands for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus.

Staphylococcus aureus is a type of bacteria (germ) that can live harmlessly on the human skin, but can sometimes cause a number of common infections. It is found in the nose and in skin creases of 20-40 per cent of normal healthy people. This 'bug' does not cause a problem unless it gets into body through a skin break when you accidentally cut yourself or during surgery. MRSA may cause a simple infection such as a boil or enter your blood stream. Most commonly used antibiotics will kill off the Staphylococcus aureus infection.

How can I catch MRSA?

MRSA can be caught and passed on almost anywhere. Someone carrying the germ on their hands or skin can pass it on to another person. It can also be found in the environment or on equipment used by people carrying the germ. People can carry MRSA without knowing it. This is why it is so important that good basic hygiene standards are maintained.

Who will be screened for MRSA?

We recommend that pregnant women are screened who:

- Are planning on having a caesarean section
- Are previous MRSA carriers
- Are healthcare workers
- And have not been booked in the antenatal period by a community midwife

Remember, if you are young and healthy you will have no ill effects from carrying these bacteria. If you have any medication conditions please let your midwife know.

How do we test for MRSA?

A swab will be taken from your nose and groin. This involves a cotton bud swab being placed in and around your nose and groin. The test will not hurt but may feel a little uncomfortable. The swabs are then taken to the laboratory for testing.

What treatment will I be offered?

If you are found to be a carrier of MRSA we will offer you an ointment containing special antibiotics to apply inside your nose. We will also advise you to wash your skin and hair in a disinfectant called Chlorhexidine.

What can I do to reduce the risk of catching MRSA?

It is important that all the family follow good personal hygiene rules (whether you have MRSA or not).

It is important to wash and dry your hands:
- After going to the toilet and blowing your nose
- Before and after dealing with a wound
- Before and after assisting with personal care for any other member of the family
- After you do household tasks such as cleaning
- Before eating and drinking

Further information

If after reading this leaflet you have any further questions please contact your own GP or midwife, or telephone Maternity Outpatients on 01384 244351.

Reference: www.rcn.org.uk