

MRSA screening - how to use your self-swab kit

Department of Cardiology
Information for Patients

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What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*.

Staphylococcus aureus is a very common germ (bacteria). Around 1 in 3 people carry this on their skin or in the lining of their nose and throat. This bacteria is often harmless. Sometimes it can cause skin infections like boils, abscesses and can infect wounds. These infections are normally mild and are easily treated. Certain strains of the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria have become untreatable by (but not all) common antibiotics (like penicillin). So these antibiotics do not work for treating the infection. These strains are called MRSA. It can be difficult to treat if it does cause an infection.



How will I know if I have MRSA?

We can only find out if you have MRSA through tests in a laboratory. If you are being admitted to a high risk ward or if you have had MRSA before, we will screen you when you are admitted to the hospital.

We also screen you before your planned admission for example at a pre-assessment clinic or by sending a test in post. You do this test using a cotton bud to collect a sample from:

- inside your nose,
- near your bottom (perineum),
- any medical devices (such as a catheter used to collect pee),
- any wounds or breaks in your skin,

Why do I need to have MRSA swabs taken?

This is to check if you are carrying the MRSA germ.

If the swabs are MRSA positive, this means you have an MRSA germ. We will give you an antimicrobial body wash for your skin and nasal ointment that should be put inside the nostrils. This will reduce the numbers of MRSA before your operation or procedure.

Being a carrier of MRSA is nothing to be worried about. It is quite common. You can carry MRSA without having any symptoms.

What treatment will I need?

If you have an MRSA germ you will need an antiseptic treatment that helps stop wound infections.

The recommended treatment is a

body wash/liquid soap and an ointment which you will need to apply to the inside of both your nostrils.

You will be advised how to use this treatment.

You have been asked to take your own MRSA screen so that you do not need to make another visit to the hospital.

What will I use to do the swabbing?

You will be sent or given a screening pack which has these items:

- 2 capped swabs.
- A container of sterile water or sodium chloride (salt water). This is for moistening the swabs before you use them.

Preparing for screening

1. Clean and dry the area that you will be using for the test.
2. Wash your hands. We do not want the swab to pick up other germs before or during the swabbing process.
3. Take out all the items from the pack we have given you and place them onto the clean flat surface.



The 1st swab: swabbing the nose

1. Open the container of water or sodium chloride. Place the container on a flat surface. Make sure you do not spill the container.
2. Break the seal on the 1st swab tube by twisting the cap. You should then pull the swab to remove it from the tube. Keep hold of the swab and place the swab tube on the flat surface.
3. Keeping hold of the swab in one hand, carefully take the opened container of water or sodium chloride in the other hand. Gently squeeze and pour a few drops from the container onto the cotton tip of the swab. The swab should be wet. Do not put the swab down.
4. Put the container of water or sodium chloride back on to the flat surface.
5. Holding the wet swab by the cap, place it inside your nostril. Rub gently inside the nostril by creating circles with the swab inside your nose. Do this for 5 to 10 seconds. Using the same swab repeat this inside the other nostril.
6. Carefully place the swab back into the tube. Make sure not to touch the length or end of the swab.
7. Place the tube back on the flat surface. Close the tube by pressing the cap back on to the top.
8. Label the tube with all the basic details and mark it as '**Nose**'.



The 2nd swab: swabbing the perineum (flat area between your front passage and your back passage)

1. Take the 2nd swab tube and hold the swab by using the cap at the end of the tube.
2. Break the seal on the swab tube by twisting the cap and then pull the swab to remove it from the tube. Keep hold of the swab and place the swab tube on the flat surface.
3. Remember that when removing the swab do not touch the length of the swab or the cotton tip.
4. Keeping hold of the swab in one hand, carefully take the opened container of water or sodium chloride in the other hand. Gently squeeze and pour a few drops from the container onto the cotton tip of the swab. The swab should be wet. Do not put the swab down.
5. Put the container of water or sodium chloride back on the flat surface.
6. Holding the wet swab by the cap, place the swab against the flat piece of skin in front of your back passage. Move the swab backwards and forwards against the skin for 5 firm strokes, be careful you don't touch the back passage.
7. Carefully place the swab back in its tube. Make sure not to touch the length or tip of the swab.
8. Place the tube back on the flat surface. Close the tube by pressing the cap back on to the top.
9. Label the tube with all the basic details and mark it as '**Perineum**'.



After taking my swabs what should I do next?

1. Place both swab tube containers in the plastic bag attached.
2. Remove the sticky tape at the top of the bag and fold over the top of the request form. This will seal the bag.
3. Dispose of any left-over water or sodium chloride by pouring it down a sink with running water. Put the container in a bin.
4. Wash your hands after taking your swabs.
5. Place the plastic bag into the addressed envelope and return it 7 days before the procedure.

Contact details:

If you need any more information please contact the Cardiac Rhythm Team on **0116 258 3848**.

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Visit www.uhleicester.nhs.uk for maps and information about visiting Leicester's Hospitals.
To give feedback about this information sheet, contact uhl-tr.informationforpatientsmailbox@nhs.net

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