



## What is MRSA/MSSA?

At the Great Falls Clinic Medical Center we are committed to reducing infection in our facility by giving high quality patient care. One of the methods that will assist in preventing healthcare associated infections (HAIs) and surgical site infections (SSIs) is preoperative screening for **MRSA** (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*) and **MSSA** (methicillin-sensitive *Staphylococcus aureus* or *Staph aureus*).

### What are MRSA and MSSA?

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to as “staph”, is a bacteria commonly found on the skin of healthy people. It is carried in the noses or on the skin of approximately 30% of the population. Occasionally, staph can get into the body and cause an infection. This infection can be minor (such as pimples, boils, and other skin conditions) or serious (such as blood or pneumonia). Methicillin is in a class of antibiotics commonly used to treat staph infections. Although this class of antibiotics is very effective in treating most staph infections, some staph bacteria have developed resistance to methicillin and can no longer be killed by this antibiotic.

1. Resistant bacteria are called *methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus*, or **MRSA**.
2. The bacteria that can be treated by methicillin class antibiotics are **MSSA**.

Most people who have MRSA or MSSA are colonized, which means that the bacteria is present in the nose and on the skin, but doing no harm to the person.

Occasionally MRSA or MSSA can cause an infection. This may be a wound infection, such as a red, inflamed surgical incision or may be more serious, such as septicemia (infection of the blood). If a patient has an infection caused by either MRSA or MSSA it can be treated with antibiotics.

### Why do we screen for MRSA and MSSA?

People can carry MRSA or MSSA without any symptoms. MRSA/MSSA screening before surgery will enable us to identify if you are carrying the bacteria and will help us provide you with treatment. This is very important because it helps reduce your risk of developing an infection at the site of your surgery causing a surgical site infection or SSI.

### How is the screening done?

Your nasal area (nares) will be swabbed prior to surgery. The swabs will be sent to a laboratory and results will be available at the time of your surgery.

### **What happens if we find MSSA or MRSA and how is it treated?**

If the results are positive, the treatment is simple and consists of a nasal ointment which will begin the morning of surgery. Do not worry. You are unlikely to suffer any harm or pass it on to anyone else with certain precautions.

### **How are MRSA and MSSA Spread?**

The most common way for MRSA and MSSA to be spread is on the hands. The single most important way of preventing the spread of these bacteria is by hand washing with soap and water or using an alcohol gel. Other ways the bacteria may be spread are:

1. Sharing personal items, such as towels or razors that have touched infected skin
2. Touching surfaces or items, such as used bandages contaminated with the bacteria
3. Having direct contact with someone who has the infection

### **What are the signs and symptoms of MRSA /MSSA skin infections?**

Most staph (MRSA/MSSA) infections appear as a bump or infected area on the skin that may be:

1. Red
2. Full of pus or other drainage
3. Accompanied a fever

### **How to protect your family and others from MRSA/MSSA infections?**

1. Know the signs of MRSA and get it treated early
2. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered
3. Use good hand hygiene such as washing and cleaning hands regularly
4. Do not share personal items such as towels and razors

For more information go to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov)

### ***For any questions call:***

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