

What does it mean if your test shows that you do not have MRSA in your nose?

If the test shows that you do not have MRSA in your nose, it means that you are probably not a MRSA carrier. However, the test is not always accurate. You might still be a MRSA carrier even if the test does not show it.

What are the pros and cons of being tested for MRSA?

Reasons why you may want to be tested:

- The test is simple, fast, easy and doesn't hurt.
- If the test shows MRSA in your nose, you will know that you should take extra care to help prevent the spread of MRSA to your family and other patients by washing your hands.
- If providers know you carry MRSA, they will take extra care to help prevent the spread of MRSA to others.

Reasons you may not want to be tested:

- If the test shows MRSA, your healthcare team may place you in a private room or in a room with other patients who have MRSA. You may receive fewer visits from the healthcare team.
- If the test shows MRSA, transfer from the hospital to another facility (for example, a nursing home) may be more difficult.

This is because other facilities may also worry about the spread of MRSA. This varies by specific hospital and other facilities.

- People may treat you differently if they know that you have MRSA. Sharing this information with others may make you or them uncomfortable.

Important note: Whether or not you take the test for MRSA, wash/clean your hands frequently! VA is working to prevent the spread of MRSA.

For more information about this test, please contact:

<http://www.va.gov/pittsburgh/MRSA>
MRSA: Should I Take the MRSA Test?, June 2008

MRSA

**Methicillin-Resistant
*Staphylococcus aureus***

Should I Take the MRSA Test?



What Veterans Need to Know about the MRSA Test

 **Department of
Veterans Affairs**



Should I take the MRSA test?

This fact sheet provides information about methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA).

Should I take a MRSA test?

The decision is up to you. VA patients have the right to accept or refuse any treatment or procedure that their healthcare provider recommends. You have the right to receive your healthcare from VA. Your decision to accept or refuse the MRSA test will not change that right.

Only you can decide if MRSA testing is right for you. Read this whole brochure and think about the information in it.

What is MRSA?

MRSA stands for **m**ethicillin-**r**esistant *Staphylococcus aureus*. MRSA is a germ that may live on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. MRSA can cause serious infection or death in some patients, especially the elderly and those who are already very ill. People can carry MRSA from the community to the hospital or from the hospital to the community. This fact sheet provides information about MRSA in the hospital.

Why is MRSA a concern?

You can carry MRSA without knowing it because it does not always make people sick with an infection. The VA is trying to make

sure that MRSA is not spread from patient to patient. One way VA is doing this is MRSA testing of patients to find out if they carry this germ. If you test positive for MRSA when you are hospitalized you:

- Have a greater chance of getting sick with an MRSA infection.
- May pass MRSA on to other patients.
- Will want to take special care of yourself by washing and cleaning your hands frequently.

What is VA doing about trying to control MRSA?

Here's what the VA is doing to reduce the spread of MRSA:

- Providing patients tests for MRSA on admission, transfer and discharge.
- Placing patients who carry MRSA in private rooms or in rooms with other patients who carry MRSA.
- Having staff wash hands before and after any patient contact.
- Having staff wear gloves and gowns when caring for patients who are known to carry MRSA.
- Actively involving VA leadership, staff and patients in trying to stop the spread of MRSA.

What is MRSA testing?

Testing for MRSA is simple. It is done by rubbing a cotton swab carefully in your nose. It does not hurt but it may tickle. The test only takes a few seconds. The laboratory will process the swab. This may take about two days. It may be done when you are admitted to the hospital, at transfer from one unit to another, and at discharge.

What does it mean if your test shows that you have MRSA in your nose?

- You are currently a carrier of the MRSA germ. MRSA is in your nose but you may not have an infection from it now.
- You may not have any symptoms.
- You can pass MRSA on to other people.
- In some cases, the MRSA germ may go away on its own.

You may be placed in a private room or in a room with other patients who have MRSA while in the hospital. This is called "precautions." Staff may wear gloves, gowns, and if necessary, masks when they care for you. The VA may treat you for MRSA, but usually only if you are sick from MRSA or will have major surgery.

