Multi-resistant organisms in the community – MRSA, VRE and C. DIFFICILE

Advice for clients, families and carers
What are MROs?

The bacteria that usually live in our bodies sometimes cause infections, which are treated with antibiotics. Multi-resistant organisms (MROs) are bacteria that have become resistant to the antibiotics normally used in their treatment.

MROs are often linked to treatment in hospitals or other healthcare facilities but can also affect people in the community.

Examples of MROs

• Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) (also called “golden staph”) can cause abscesses and boils and infect wounds.

• Vancomycin-resistant enterococci (VRE) live in the digestive and urinary systems but can cause infection in other parts of the body.

• *Clostridium difficile* can cause diarrhoea and can live in the environment for a long time.

Who is at risk of getting an MRO?

MRO infection is more likely in people who have:

• had antibiotic treatment
• been in hospital (especially for surgery)
• a weakened immune system
• medical devices that stay in for some time (urinary catheters or IV lines).

Older people tend to be more vulnerable to infection.

How do MROs spread?

MROs can be spread from anyone’s hands — you, care workers, visitors — or from touching contaminated surfaces (e.g. bathroom fixtures, handrails).

If you have an MRO, try not to touch the infected part of your body.

Care workers may wear gloves and an apron/gown while caring for you, to help stop the spread of infection.

Hand hygiene helps stop the spread of MROs

The most important thing you can do to protect yourself and others from infection is to perform hand hygiene often, either with soap and water or with an alcohol-based hand rub.

Always perform hand hygiene when your hands look dirty and before:

• handling anything that goes in your mouth
• touching your eyes, nose or mouth
• eating or drinking
• touching a dressing.
Prevent the spread of disease by performing hand hygiene

**HAND RUB**

1. Apply alcohol-based hand rub to hands

2. Rub hands together

**HAND WASH**

1. Wet hands with running water

2. Apply soap to hands

4. Rinse hands with water

5. Dry hands thoroughly.
How to perform hand hygiene:

1. Wet hands
2. Apply soap
3. Lather soap and rub hands together thoroughly
4. Rinse hands
5. Dry hands thoroughly

Once dry, your hands are clean.
Other ways to prevent the spread of MROs at home include:

• Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and then perform hand hygiene.
• If you have a wound, keep the skin around the dressing clean and dry.
• Follow instructions on looking after the medical devices you have. If you’re not sure what to do, ask.
• Try not to have too much clutter in your house.
• Make sure pets are not in the room during care activities.

Because MROs are difficult to treat it is important to try to stop them spreading.

Also perform hand hygiene after:

• using the bathroom/toilet
• sneezing, coughing or disposing of tissues
• handling rubbish or dirty washing
• touching a contaminated surface
• touching a dressing
• handling pets/animals.
What happens if you have an MRO?

It’s a good idea to have your own personal care items (e.g. towels, combs or face washers) and not share them. No extra precautions are needed.

Can people still visit you?

Yes people can visit you.

Visitors should perform hand hygiene when they arrive and before they leave.

People with a long-term health problem should check with their health carers before visiting you.

Talk to your care worker

• Don’t be afraid to ask your care workers if they have performed hand hygiene.

• Tell your care worker straight away if you feel unwell.

• If you’re not sure about how to look after the medical devices you have, ask.

• Tell your care worker if the area around the insertion site where drips, lines, tubes or drains become red, swollen or painful.

• Tell your care worker promptly if the dressing becomes loose or wet.
More information

Don’t hesitate to ask your doctor or care worker for more information.

Consumer guides are also available on specific healthcare associated infections such as MRSA, VRE and C. difficile

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au

References


Hand Hygiene Australia (2008) Hand Hygiene Brochure

All information in this publication is correct as at April 2013