

Transfer from a healthcare facility abroad

You have recently been admitted in a healthcare facility abroad and it is possible that you have brought a particular bacterium (MRSA bacterium) with you from that healthcare facility. For this reason, you are being cared for in a specific way. This leaflet explains why and how this action is taken.

Staphylococcus: an ordinary bacterium

We all carry around with us bacteria, which occur everywhere on the body, but also in the body. These bacteria are inherent to human beings and fulfill a useful function. For example, bacteria help us to digest our food. Bacteria on the skin can protect us against foreign 'invaders', in other words: bacteria that do not belong to us.

The *Staphylococcus aureus* is one such bacterium. Many people carry this *Staphylococcus aureus* with them, in their noses or on their skin. In some people, this bacterium can cause boils or inflamed sores. Infections of this kind usually clear up by themselves, although it is sometimes necessary to treat them.

In a hospital, however, *Staphylococcus aureus* can cause serious infections. Where there is a large number of people close together, this increases the likelihood of an infection being passed on. In addition, patients are often less able to fight off infections due to reduced resistance. Special attention is therefore paid to the prevention of infections with this bacterium in the hospital.

If an infection nevertheless develops, it can be successfully treated with antibiotics. In the Netherlands, most *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria respond well to the antibiotics in common use.

MRSA: a less susceptible Staphylococcus

It sometimes occurs that one of these Staphylococcus bacteria is not susceptible to the antibiotics commonly prescribed in the Netherlands. Staphylococcus bacteria of this kind are known as Methicilin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA). Resistant means that the bacterium is not susceptible to methicilin, but also a large group of other antibiotics related to this antibiotic.

This MRSA does not cause more frequent or more serious infections than an ordinary *Staphylococcus aureus*. The only distinctive feature of these bacteria is that they do not respond well to the well-known antibiotics. Treatment with other antibiotics can therefore be required.

Fortunately this is possible: there is a limited number of drugs that can be used. Obviously these have to be used very sparingly to prevent MRSA becoming resistant to them as well.

It is therefore vitally important that these MRSA bacteria should not be capable of spreading in the hospital. A number of precautions are taken in Dutch hospitals (including VU University Medical Center) to prevent, as far as possible, these bacteria from spreading.

Precautions

To test whether you are carrying the MRSA bacterium, culture specimens are taken from different parts of the body. This means that smears are obtained with cotton buds. These cultures are checked in the laboratory for the presence of MRSA. Mostly within one day it is clear

whether the MRSA has or has not been found. Sometimes (during the weekend for example) it takes longer.

Until the results of culturing are known, as a precaution we assume that you are carrying the bacterium. This means that you will be cared for in 'contact isolation' or in 'strict isolation'. In this manner we try to prevent the bacterium from spreading in the hospital.

In strict isolation you will be cared for in a single room with a corridor. The door to this corridor should not be left open. Hospital staff entering the room will wear protective coats, masks and gloves. If you go to a department where treatment is given, such as the radiology department or an operating theatre, precautions will also be taken to prevent the spread of any MRSA bacteria which may be present.

In contact isolation you will be cared for in a single room; the door can be left open. Hospital staff will wear protective coats and gloves during care or treatment.

If it is found that you are not carrying the MRSA bacterium, and you are cared for in strict isolation, the isolation will be converted to contact isolation until the result of other resistant bacteria is known. If the bacterium is present, you will be cared for in strict isolation during your treatment.

Visitors

If visitors need to take precautionary measures, this will be done in consultation with the nursing staff. Upon leaving the room, hands must be disinfected with alcohol.

After visiting you, your visitors must leave the hospital immediately. We therefore request all visitors to complete any other visits they need to make in the hospital before they come to see you.

Your understanding

It is clearly important that this bacterium does not appear in the hospital. We therefore ask for your understanding of the need to take these precautions.

If you have any questions or problems, please speak to the nurse or the doctor treating you.