

## What are multi-drug resistant bacteria?

Multi-drug resistant (MDR) bacteria are bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics. They cause the same type of infections as non-resistant bacteria. The difference is that if you develop an infection with a multi-drug resistant bacteria, the choice of suitable antibiotic to treat your infection may be considerably more limited. You may not need antibiotic treatment if you do not have an active infection but are colonised with a multi-drug resistant bacteria (bacteria is present but not causing infection).

## How did I get multi-drug resistant bacteria?

Multi-drug resistant bacteria can be picked up in the same way as other bacteria. They are usually spread through direct contact with surfaces on which they live or are present.

They can also be spread through close personal contact with infected individuals or sharing personal items such as towels and razors. Some MDR bacteria can be transmitted through the air when a patient coughs or sneezes.

MDR bacteria can spread from one part of your body to another. MDR bacteria can also be caused by repeated (though sometimes essential) or incomplete treatment with antibiotics.

## How can we prevent the spread of multi-drug resistant bacteria?

- Prescribers should ensure that any antibiotic treatment being considered is appropriate and absolutely necessary.
- Hospitals/care homes should ensure appropriate infection prevention and control arrangements are in place.
- Handwashing is one of the most important ways of preventing the spread.
- All equipment, especially if it is shared between patients/clients, must be cleaned thoroughly between uses.
- Staff may wear gloves and aprons when caring for you. In some cases they may also need to wear a mask.
- If someone in a healthcare setting is carrying an MDR bacteria, it may be necessary to take swabs to see if others are carrying the same bacteria. This is known as 'screening'

## Can I still have visitors?

- Yes. Unless you have been told otherwise, it is safe for family members to visit you.
- Visitors should not move from patient to patient; if they are visiting others, it is better if they visit you last.
- Visitors should always wash their hands before and after visiting.
- Visitors generally do not need to wear gloves, aprons or a mask unless a nurse or doctor tells them that they should.
- Follow the infection prevention and control requirements of the hospital/care home.

## What will happen when I go home?

Having a multi-drug resistant bacteria should not affect your day-to-day life or stop you from carrying out your normal activities. You will be given instructions by the nursing/care staff when you are going home. Your clothes can be laundered with the rest of the household laundry.

**It is important if you have been told that you have an MDR bacteria, that you inform healthcare staff who may provide care for you in the future.**

## How can antibiotic resistance be avoided?

- Antibiotics should only be taken if they are absolutely necessary and when they have been prescribed for you by a healthcare professional.
- Antibiotics should be taken as prescribed and the full course of treatments should be completed.
- Antibiotics do not work against viruses such as colds and flu.

If you require further advice or information, please contact the hospital's Infection Prevention and Control Team or a member of the ward/care home staff.

**Infection prevention and control is everyone's responsibility.**

**Healthcare workers, patients and visitors all have an important role to play in preventing the spread of healthcare associated infections.**

# Multi-drug resistant bacteria

**Information leaflet for patients and visitors**