

Neonatology

Screening for antibiotic-resistant bacteria

Information for parents and families

Introduction

This leaflet explains the screening we do for all new babies to the neonatal unit, and what actions we take when antibiotic resistant bacteria are found.

What are antibiotic / multi-drug resistant bacteria?

Bacteria, commonly called bugs or germs, are tiny living microorganisms. Some bacteria can cause infections. The medications that destroy or slow down the growth of these harmful bacteria are called antibiotics. When an antibiotic no longer has the ability to effectively control or kill a certain bacteria, we say that the bacteria has become 'resistant' to that antibiotic. This means the bacteria will continue to multiply and cause infection even though there is a sufficient dose of antibiotic in the body.

When a bacteria is resistant to more than one antibiotic, we call it a multi-drug resistant bacteria. When these bacteria cause infections, they are particularly difficult to treat as there are fewer medications that will work.

What is colonisation?

Some multi-drug resistant bacteria can live on the skin or in the gut and not cause any problems. This is known as 'colonisation' or is sometimes referred to as being a 'carrier'. However, if these bacteria spread into other parts of the body such as the bloodstream, they can cause infections. It is important for us to know who is carrying multi-drug resistant bacteria because if an infection develops, we can choose the right medication straight away.

In a hospital, where there are many vulnerable patients, it is also important for us to do everything we can to prevent the spread of all bacteria, in particularly multi-drug resistant bacteria as these cause infections that are the most difficult to treat.

How do you screen for colonisation?

All babies admitted to hospital are now screened (tested, even if they look healthy) regularly to check whether they are colonised/ carriers of certain multi-drug resistant bacteria. Screening can happen at the time of admission, during the hospital stay, or because a baby is at an increased risk of being a carrier. Screening usually requires a swab from the nose, ear and sometimes the bottom (rectum).

What will happen to patients who have a multi-drug resistant bacteria?

Carriers of multi-drug resistant bacteria, or patients infected with these microorganisms, will sometimes be placed in a separate room whilst in hospital, away from other patients. We always will need to take extra contact precautions as well, such as using aprons and gloves when handling a colonised baby, to prevent any spread.

Colonisation with multi-drug resistant bacteria is usually not treated. Only carriers of certain microorganisms, such as MRSA, are given a short course of treatment in an attempt to eradicate these bacteria. For people colonised with MRSA, this is a five-day course of body wash and antibiotic creams applied to the nose.

How are multi-drug resistant bacteria spread?

It can be difficult to say exactly when or where the bacteria was picked up. However, there is an increased chance of picking up these multi-drug resistant bacteria from being in a hospital abroad or being in contact with a carrier either in a hospital or elsewhere. The most important thing you can do to help us is to wash your hands regularly, especially after using the toilet or changing nappies, before eating food, and every time you are entering or leaving the neonatal unit or a baby's bed space.

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

