Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Multidrug Resistant Organisms (MDROs)

This information explains multidrug resistant organisms (MDROs), including how they are spread and how MDRO infections are treated.

What is a multidrug resistant organism?

A multidrug resistant organism (MDRO) is a germ that is resistant to many antibiotics. If a germ is resistant to an antibiotic, it means that certain treatments will not work or may be less effective.

MDROs can be hard to treat since many antibiotics won't work to treat them.

Examples of MDROs include:

- Methicillin resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)
- Resistant *Acinetobacter*

These germs can cause illnesses, including:

- Urinary tract infections
- Pneumonia
- Blood infections
- Wound infections

How are MDROs spread?

Most MDRO infections are spread by direct contact with an infected person's bodily fluids, such as blood, drainage from a wound, urine, bowel movements (stool), or sputum (phlegm). They can also be spread by contact with equipment or surfaces that may have the germ on them. Casual contact, such as touching or hugging, does not spread MDROs.

Who is at risk for an MDRO infection?

You're more likely to get an MDRO infection if you:

- Are older.
- Have a weakened immune system.
- Have chronic illnesses, such as cancer or diabetes.
- Have been treated with antibiotics in the past.
- Had a recent surgery.
- Have had repeated or long stays in the hospital.
- Have open wounds or sores.
- Have tubes or drains in your body.

What are the symptoms of an MDRO infection?

Your symptoms will depend on the location and type of infection you have.

How is an MDRO infection treated?

MDRO infections are treated with antibiotics that the germ causing your infection isn't resistant to. Your doctor will decide which medication(s) to give you based on the germ and location of your infection.

What isolation precautions are taken in the hospital if I have an MDRO infection?

Isolation precautions are steps we take to stop infections from spreading from person to person. If you're diagnosed with an MDRO infection while you're in the hospital:

- You will be placed in a private room.
- The door to your room can stay open.
- A sign will be posted on your door telling all staff to clean their hands. They can use soap and water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before going into and after leaving your room.
- All staff will need to wear a yellow gown and gloves while in your room. These are found outside of your room and can be disposed of inside your room.
- If you leave your room for tests, you must wear a yellow gown and gloves, or be covered with a clean sheet.
- If you leave your room to walk around the unit, you must wear a yellow gown and gloves.
- You will not be able to go to the following areas of the hospital:
    - Pantry on your unit.
    - Pediatric recreation areas on M9.
    - Cafeteria.
    - Main lobby.
    - Any other public area of the hospital.

What precautions should I take at home if I have an MDRO infection?

Be sure to do the following at home:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after using the bathroom.
- Wash your hands after having contact with blood, urine, or drainage from a wound.
- Use a disinfectant (such as Clorox® or Lysol®) to wipe any surface that may have come in contact with the germ, such as your doorknob.

Where can I get more information about MDROs?

If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or nurse. You can also visit this website for more information:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
www.cdc.gov/drugresistance

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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