

# MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) Testing

## What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus or “staph” is a common germ that about one out of every two to three people have on their skin or in their nose. This germ does not cause any problems for most people who have it on their skin. MRSA (often pronounced “mer-sa”) is a form of staph that cannot be treated with some of the antibiotics most commonly used to treat staph infections. The percentage of staph germs that are the resistant type varies in different parts of the country. In the Bay Area, one in three staph germs are the MRSA type.

## Why was my baby tested?

Starting on 1/1/09, California law requires that all babies admitted to intensive care units in California must be screened for this germ. This was done on your baby’s first day swabbing the very front of their nose.

## What does the result of this test mean?

If the test is positive, it means that at the moment the baby’s nose was swabbed, MRSA was found to be one of the germs living in the nose. (We all have lots of germs in our nose at all times). When a specific type of germ is found on the body and is not causing disease we call this colonization. If the test is negative, it means that your baby is not colonized with MRSA at that time.

## What is the difference between being colonized and having an infection?

If you have an infection, you are usually sick and your doctor will give you a treatment of some kind for the infection. If you are only colonized, you are not sick and no treatment is necessary.

## What should I do if I am told that my baby’s test is positive?

Carry on with your daily life as usual. Staph germs, including those called MRSA, are one of many germs that can be found on normal babies. Being on the skin or in the nose does not mean you need to do anything different or special with your baby.

## Why is my baby being put on special precautions?

To prevent MRSA infections, doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers try to prevent spreading germs around. All people who care for your infant are required to clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before and after they touch the baby. All shared equipment that comes in contact with your baby is cleaned before use. To help remind us to be extra careful the staff may use extra precautions such as gloves when touching your baby and barrier gowns when holding your baby. Since you are not touching other babies you do not need to use gloves or gowns. It is still very important to clean your hands before and after being with your baby.

## What can I do to prevent infections including MRSA?

Whether or not you or your baby are colonized, a few simple things will help prevent infections with most germs.

## In the hospital:

- Watch for and remind doctors, nurses and other healthcare providers to clean their hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based hand rub before touching your baby and/or your baby’s things. **If you**

**think someone has not done this it is okay  
to remind them!**

- Make sure you and your visitors also clean their hands before and after touching your baby and your baby's things.

At home:

- Clean your hands regularly: before you eat or feed your baby, before preparing food, after using the bathroom or changing your baby's diaper, after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose.
- Routinely clean the surfaces you touch frequently, such as faucets, doorknobs, remote controls, keyboards, telephones, chair/couch arms, kitchen surfaces. Use a commercial wipe or soap and water.

What should I do if I have an infection?

If you have an infection or an illness you should call to speak with your baby's doctor at the hospital before visiting. Routine cleaning of your hands and your environment is the best way to prevent the spread of your infection to others. Your doctor or nurse will answer other questions you may have.

**REMEMBER:**

Not all infections are caused by MRSA and not all babies with MRSA have infections.

Please ask your baby's doctor if you have other questions.

*Thank you for reminding our staff to clean their hands!*