

Multidrug-Resistant Organism (MDRO) Infections

This handout explains what multidrug-resistant organisms (MDRO) are and how they impact your care at UW Health.

Multidrug-Resistant Organisms (MDRO)

MDROs are germs that are resistant to certain antibiotics. This means those antibiotics cannot be used to treat or kill those germs.

Why are these germs important?

MDROs are becoming more common. We often have these germs on our skin or inside our body with no problems. These germs can also cause many kinds of infections in people in different areas of the body, such as in the urine, lungs, blood, and surgery sites.

Who is most likely to get these infections?

Anyone can become infected with an MDRO. Infections most often occur in the elderly or people who:

- Have other health problems.
- Have weak immune systems.
- Need to use antibiotics for a long time.
- Have frequent contact with the health care system.
- Live in a nursing home or assisted living.

Can MDRO germs be treated?

Yes, there are still some antibiotics that can kill MDROs. Not all patients with MDROs need antibiotics. Sometimes, the germs live on the skin and in the body and do not cause infection.

How will this change my care in the hospital?

- Tell the health care team that you have had an MDRO infection in the past year. For example: “I was diagnosed with an MDRO in the urine 5 months ago.”
- Health care workers will wear gowns and gloves when they care for you. This is known as contact isolation precautions. This lowers the risk of spreading these germs to other patients and protects the health care workers.
- Your health care team should wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol hand gel before and after they care for you. If you do not see them clean their hands, ask them to do so.
- Clean your hands often. Be sure to clean them after you use the bathroom and before you eat.
- Put on a clean robe or a clean hospital gown and clean your hands before you leave your room. Keep the robe on while you are outside your room.
- Stay on the inpatient unit. Avoid direct physical contact with patients, kitchen, or lounge areas.

Can my family and friends visit me in the hospital?

In most cases, you can have visitors. They will need to follow the same rules as the health care workers. This means they need to:

1. Wear gowns and gloves to go into your room.
2. Take off their gowns and gloves when they are ready to leave your room.

3. Clean their hands with soap and water or alcohol hand gel.

Visitors who spend the night should speak with the nurse about wearing gowns and gloves.

People should not visit if they have any signs of an illness that can be spread from person-to-person. This includes a cough, sore throat, fever, rash, or diarrhea.

How will this change my care in the clinic?

- Be sure to tell the health care workers that you have had an MDR infection in the past year. For example: “I was diagnosed with an MDRO in the urine 5 months ago.”
- In some clinic settings, health care workers will wear gowns and gloves when they care for you. This is known as contact isolation precautions. This lowers the risk of spreading these germs to other patients and protects the health care workers.
- Your health care team should wash their hands with soap and water or use alcohol gel before and after they care for you. If you do not see them clean their hands, ask them to do so.

What do I need to do in my own home?

There are a few things you should do to decrease the chance of getting an MDRO again and spreading it to others.

- If you are prescribed an antibiotic to treat an infection, take it exactly as prescribed. Be sure to take **all** of the medicine.
- Clean your hands with soap and water or alcohol hand gel often. Clean your hands after you go to the bathroom, before you touch food, and before and after wound care.
- Tell the people who live with you to clean their hands often.
- **Do not** share personal items like towels or razors.
- Wash and dry your clothes and bed sheets in the warmest washer temperatures written on the clothes labels.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered until healed. Do not touch other people’s cuts or bandages.
- Follow your doctor’s instructions.

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 7/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#7259