

How often does testing for AROs need to be done?

During your stay in hospital your risk for having an ARO may change. You might be admitted to a high risk area or sometimes share a room with someone who we later find out has an ARO. This could happen after you have already spent some time together. Sadly there are very few private rooms.

If you happen to spend time in a room with someone who has an ARO you will require 2 additional tests. We place an alert on your hospital record in case we do not have enough time to get this testing completed. This will remind us to test you if you happen to come back to hospital.

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Testing Patients For AROs (Antibiotic Resistant Organisms)

Patient Information Pamphlet



What are Antibiotic Resistant Organisms or AROs?

All of us have germs on or in our body. Most germs are harmless, some are helpful. A few germs can make us sick. Some germs have become resistant to the drugs that are most often used to treat infections. These germs are called Antibiotic Resistant Organisms or AROs. Some common AROs are called MRSA or VRE.

ARO's tend to be more common in hospitals due to the amount of drugs used to fight infections, the fact that many at risk people stay in the hospital, and the numerous tests and activities that occur daily.

Most of the time AROs live on our skin or in our gut and do not make us sick. If they happen to get into places where they are not normally found they can cause an infection. This could be through a cut in the skin, into our lungs or urinary tract.

It is very important to know if you happen to have an ARO so that hospital staff can take extra precautions when they care for you. This information also helps us choose the right drug if you do get sick with an infection.

How are AROs spread?

ARO's are spread from one person to another by touching. This could be from touching a person who has an ARO or items in their room. Hands are the most common way AROs get around.

How do I get tested for AROs?

If you are going to be staying in the hospital we will first ask you questions about your history. This helps us to see if you are more at risk for having an ARO.

Some of the questions we will ask are:

- Have you had MRSA or VRE in the past?
- Have you ever been admitted to a hospital outside of Canada?
- Have you ever travelled to the Indian subcontinent?
- Have you spent time in a hospital or nursing home?
- Have you lived with someone who had MRSA or VRE?
- Are you an oncology patient or do you receive dialysis?
- Do you have a device like a catheter, drain, feeding tube, PICC line?
- Do you have nursing care at home?
- Do you live in a residence, shelter or group home?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, then you should be tested to see if you have an ARO.

In certain areas of the hospital the risk for AROs is higher than other areas. These areas will ask the questions, but will test all patients admitted to the area. Critical care and medicine are examples of high risk areas.

What type of test is required for AROs?

Most AROs are found on our skin or in our gut. The best way to find AROs is by using a swab of your nose, and a swab of your bottom and rectal area. Because AROs are often found in our gut, a stool culture may also be used. For certain AROs, like MRSA, we may also swab any wounds or areas where you might have a device.

How long does it take to get the results?

ARO testing can take from 24-48 hours up to 4 or 5 days. It will depend on what type of ARO might be found.

What happens when I am in the hospital?

All staff working in the hospital are trained in ways to stop the spread of germs and this includes AROs. The most important way to stop the spread of germs is by keeping our hands clean. Soap and water or alcohol rub may be used to clean hands. You will be able to find sinks and alcohol rub all over the hospital.

If you are at risk of having an ARO, this is what to expect while we are waiting for your test results:

- Staff will use extra items when they care for you. A gown will be worn when they enter your room or bed space. This stops staff from picking up AROs on their clothing. Gloves will be used at times to stop the spread of germs on their hands.
- A sign will be placed on your door to remind others to wear a gown and gloves.
- Everyone who leaves your room must clean their hands well.
- You must clean your hands before you leave your room and may be asked to put on a clean hospital gown.
- You do not ever need to wear gloves. This makes it hard to clean your hands at the right times.
- Your family and friends will need to wear a gown. They only need to wear gloves if they are going to care for you, like take you to the toilet or give you medicine.