

Multidrug-Resistant Organisms

Fact Sheet for Patients, Residents, and Families

What are multidrug-resistant organisms?

Multidrug-resistant organisms (MDROs) are bacteria or another organisms that are resistant to antibiotics or other drugs. This means they cannot be killed by antibiotics or other drugs.

Some MDROs have a resistance gene, which the organism uses to stop an antibiotic or other drug from killing it. This gene is made by the organism and can be passed to other organisms. This ability to “pass on” resistance to antibiotics is one reason why it is so important to take steps to prevent the spread of MDROs when someone is infected or colonized.

What does it mean to be colonized or infected with an MDRO?



A person who is **colonized** with an MDRO has the organism in or on their body, but it is not making them sick. These organisms can live in a person’s digestive system or on their skin for long periods. They can still pass the MDRO to others even if they are not sick. Someone who is colonized might later develop an infection and get sick.



A person who is **infected** with an MDRO has the MDRO in or on their body, and it is causing symptoms such as fever, diarrhea, wound drainage, or fatigue.

People at highest risk of becoming colonized or infected with an MDRO include those with:

- Frequent or long health care stays.
- Medical devices that go into the body (such as a catheter or ventilator).
- History of frequent surgeries.
- Chronic medical conditions.
- Received long courses of antibiotics.

How long will a person have an MDRO?

It is difficult to know how long a person will be colonized or infected with an MDRO. For some people the organism may go away, but in others the organisms can live in or on their bodies, such as in a the digestive system or on the skin, for long periods.




Do people with MDROs need treatment?

Treatment decisions will be made by a person’s health care provider. People who are colonized that show no symptoms of infection do not generally require treatment.



How are MDROs spread?

MDROs can be spread in different ways, including:

-  On the hands of health care workers, visitors, or family members.
-  Through contact with body fluids, such as urine, stool, drainage from wounds, saliva, or blood.
-  Via dirty objects or surfaces, such as bed rails, bedside tables, or medical equipment.

How can I prevent the spread of MDROs?

Practice good hand hygiene. Wash hands after touching body fluids, commonly used surfaces, and after visiting.



Use hand sanitizer.

1. Apply hand sanitizer to the palm of hand.
2. Rub hands together to cover all surfaces, including between fingers and under nails.
3. Rub hands together until they are dry. This should take around 20 seconds.

OR



Wash your hands with soap and water.

1. Wet hands and apply soap.
2. Rub hands together to lather all surfaces including between fingers and under nails. Do this away from the running water for at least 20 seconds.
3. Rinse hands well under running water.
4. Use a clean towel to dry hands and turn off water.

Use precautions. Special precautions are used to control the spread of MDROs. This means health care personnel may use personal protective equipment, such as gowns, gloves, or masks when providing care for a person with an MDRO. Health care personnel will advise if a person is on any type of precautions and any steps that should take during or after visiting someone with an MDRO.

Clean and disinfect. It's important to thoroughly clean and disinfect surfaces and medical equipment to prevent spread. Housekeeping staff will clean the person's room daily using approved cleaning products.

Where can I find more information on MDROs?

- Contact your health care provider or health care team with questions about MDROs.
- Visit the Healthcare-Associated Infections (HAI) Prevention Program webpage on MDROs (www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/hai/reportable-mdro.html).
- Visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention webpage on MDROs in health care settings (www.cdc.gov/hai/organisms/organisms.html).

