



St. Mary's Hospital Center adopts a series of measures after resolving an outbreak of MRSA

Montreal, December 10, 2008 – **St. Mary's Hospital Center** has managed to resolve an outbreak of Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) in the Maternal-Child Care Unit.

The appearance of MRSA was first noted in one of the newborns in the intermediate care nursery (ICN) in June 2007. Nine of the 6700 babies born between that date and September 27, 2008 were infected. Most have been minor infections and all have been successfully treated. "While MRSA is endemic to hospitals, and in the population in general, it has rarely been found in newborns in the Montreal region", says Dr. Michael Libman. "This is a highly unusual situation that we had not encountered before. We want to reassure our patients and our staff that we are taking every possible measure to prevent and treat this infection," explains Dr. Michael Libman, Infection Control Officer at St. Mary's Hospital Center.

St. Mary's Hospital Center has reinforced its infection control measures and has intensified the screening of babies. Additionally, in order to ensure appropriate treatment of babies who may receive care outside St. Mary's, other institutions and pediatricians in Montreal, Laval and Montérégie, as well as parents of babies born at St. Mary's during this period have been notified of the situation. St. Mary's was assisted in these efforts by the Infection Control team from the Department of Public Health of the Agence de la santé et des services sociaux de Montréal.

Parents of babies born at St. Mary's Hospital Center since June 2007 to present may phone 514 734-2790 or use the toll free number at 1 866 727-9511, Monday to Friday, between 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., if they have any questions or send an email to infoparentschsm@ssss.gouv.qc.ca indicating the mother's maiden name, sex and date of birth of their baby, as well as their phone number. A staff member will contact them as soon as possible.

About MRSA

- *Staphylococcus aureus* is a bacterium **normally** found on the skin of more than 30% of healthy people.
- MRSA is a form of *Staphylococcus aureus* resistant to the more commonly used antibiotics.
- People who have MRSA on their skin with no signs of infections are called carriers.
- In general, in healthy newborn babies who are carriers of MRSA, the bacteria disappear without treatment within 4 to 6 weeks.
- Infections caused by MRSA such as skin infections, eye infections (conjunctivitis), and infection of the umbilical area are **treatable with appropriate antibiotics** and usually **minor**.
- Testing of babies after leaving the Hospital is not necessary if there are no apparent signs of infection.

“It should be noted that MRSA appears to be on the rise in the community and hospitals. Healthcare institutions, healthcare workers, patients and visitors must be constantly vigilant and adhere to good infection control practices, mainly hand hygiene, particularly in clinical areas considered to be of low clinical risk such as birthing centres,” concludes Dr. Libman.

St. Mary’s Hospital Center (SMHC) is a university affiliated, community hospital which serves a multicultural population. It seeks to provide the highest level of safe patient and family focused care. St. Mary’s is an integral part of the Réseau universitaire intégré de santé (RUIS) McGill.

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