

# ARTICLE #01

NAME:

Read the article and answer the questions below:

The screenshot shows the BBC News website interface. At the top, there are navigation tabs for Home, News, Sport, Radio, TV, Weather, and Languages. Below this is a search bar and a link to 'Search'. The main header includes the BBC News logo, a 'Watch One-Minute World News' button, and a globe icon. The article title is 'Quick guide: MRSA'. The main text describes MRSA as a potentially lethal bacterium that causes infections in humans and is difficult to combat due to its resistance to certain antibiotics. It mentions that Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus is commonly found in hospitals. A sidebar on the left lists various news categories like Africa, Americas, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Middle East, South Asia, UK, Business, Health, Medical notes, Science & Environment, Technology, Entertainment, and Entertainment. A 'RELATED BBC SITES' section lists Sport, Weather, and On This Day. A 'WHAT IS A QUICK GUIDE?' section explains that these guides provide concise explanations of news topics. A 'HOSPITAL-ACQUIRED INFECTIONS IN ENGLAND (SNAPSHOT)' pie chart shows that 9% of patients are infected, while 91% are not. The 'SEE ALSO' section lists related articles, and the 'TOP HEALTH STORIES' and 'MOST POPULAR STORIES NOW' sections provide further news links.

**Quick guide: MRSA**

**MRSA is a potentially lethal bacterium that causes infections in humans. It is difficult to combat because it has developed a resistance to certain antibiotics.**

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus usually strikes in hospitals where sicker and weaker people tend to be in close proximity.

**Catching MRSA**

Infections occur where there is opportunity for MRSA to get into the body, such as at surgical wounds or where a catheter or needle is inserted.

MRSA can exist harmlessly on people's skins without their even knowing it, but if it infects someone who is already ill or weak, it can kill.

It is no more dangerous than other forms of Staphylococcus aureus. But because it has developed resistance to methicillin and other antibiotics, it is much more difficult to treat.

**MRSA deaths**

The National Audit Office estimates hospital-acquired infections contribute to some 5,000 deaths annually.

Of those caused by the

**Hospital-acquired infections in England (snapshot)** 9%

■ Infected patients  
■ Patients not infected

**WHAT IS A QUICK GUIDE?**

Quick guides are concise explanations of topics or issues in the news.

**More Quick Guides**

**SEE ALSO**

- Government 'lethargic over MRSA' 13 Mar 06 | Health
- Doctor ties 'to go in MRSA fight' 21 Feb 06 | Health

**TOP HEALTH STORIES**

- 'Plaster cast better' for sprains
- Pre-conception diet tips ignored
- Powerful incense drug warning

**MOST POPULAR STORIES NOW**

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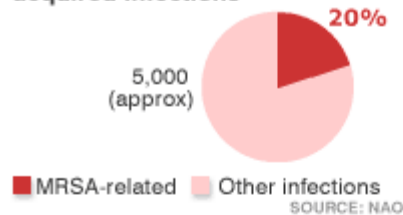
- Record nails broken in car crash
- Jade Goody 'has months to live'
- Genocide expert dies in US crash
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Most popular now, in detail

Staphylococcus aureus family, most are known to be due to the MRSA strain.

Between 2003 and 2004, mentions of MRSA on death certificates increased from 955 to 1,168.

Annual deaths involving hospital-acquired infections



The government has imposed new hygiene standards on hospitals to try to stem its growth.

### Combating the infection

The NHS is targeting ward cleaning and personal hygiene.

Tactics include providing disinfectant hand-rubs and encouraging more vigilance among patients and visitors.

Doctors are now more careful about prescribing antibiotics only when essential, which should help slow the evolution of resistance among bacteria.

### Growth of MRSA

Mandatory reporting by doctors of MRSA infections in the bloodstream - where the consequences are often more serious - was not introduced until 2001. Cases rose to a high of 7,684 in 2003/4.

The following year saw a fall to a record-low of 7,212 infections - but that is still well short of the target of fewer than 4,000 cases by 2007-8.

The latest figures show that there were 3,517 infections between October 2005 and March 2006.

More than 40% of Staphylococcus aureus infections in the UK are MRSA - one of the highest levels in Europe.

#### WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Have we missed anything out?  
Do you want to suggest a subject for a Quick Guide?

[Send us an e-mail](#)

The National Audit Office estimates that hospital-acquired infections, including MRSA, are costing the NHS about £1bn a year.

1. Do bacteria have a genetic code? Reason -briefly- your answer
2. How can bacteria become resistant to antibiotics?
3. Cite an example in which bacteria can be beneficial
4. Is there any risk of infection in hospitals? Reason your answer
5. What is the relationship between consuming less antibiotics and avoiding more resistant bacteria?