

Public Health Fact Sheet

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

- *Staphylococcus aureus* (or “Staph”) is a common type of bacteria that live on people’s skin and can cause skin infections. It can less commonly cause infections of the lungs or bloodstream.
- MRSA (Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus) is a type of Staph bacteria that is harder to treat because the germ has become resistant to Methicillin and many other antibiotics.

Who gets MRSA?

- Anyone can get MRSA infection.
- MRSA is found most often among people in hospitals and health care facilities (such as nursing homes) who have weakened immune systems.
- MRSA outbreaks may also occur among athletes, prisoners, military recruits, child care attendees, injection drug users and other groups of people who live in crowded settings and who may share contaminated items.

What are the signs and symptoms of MRSA skin infections?

- Most Staph skin infections, including MRSA, first appear as a bump. It can be a pimple, rash, boil, open wound, or look like a spider bite.
- The infected area may have: redness, warmth, swelling, pus, pain or be accompanied by fever.

How is MRSA spread?

- MRSA lives on the skin and can live on objects for 24 hours or more.
- Drainage or pus from skin lesions can spread MRSA bacteria to other parts of a person’s body or to other people during body contact.
- Sharing objects such as razors, towels, clothing and athletic equipment can spread MRSA from person-to-person.
- Poor hygiene and crowded conditions can contribute to the spread of MRSA infections.

How can I prevent myself from getting infected?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after using the toilet and before every meal.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean by using soap and water. Do not pick, touch, or scratch skin infections.
- Avoid skin contact and sharing of personal items with anyone you think could have MRSA.

What should I do if I think I have a skin infection?

- Consult your doctor; early treatment can help prevent MRSA from getting worse.
- If you are given medicine, be sure to take all your pills as prescribed.
- Follow the directions your doctor gives you, even when you begin to feel better.

If I have MRSA how can I keep others from getting it?

- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after changing your bandage.
- Keep the infected area covered with clean, dry pads.
- Wash clothes and other items that might have MRSA on them in hot water, and dry in a hot dryer.
- Regularly clean items or areas that you share with other people.

More information on MRSA: <http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/>

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