



Fact Sheet: MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus)

This fact sheet is for information only and is not meant to be used for self-diagnosis or as a substitute for consultation with a health care provider. For more information contact your health care provider or visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov.

What is MRSA?

Staphylococci or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose, usually without causing harm. MRSA is a type of staph that is resistant to several types of antibiotics. Bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics when the medicines are used often. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States.

Who gets MRSA?

Anyone can get MRSA. It is found most often amongst people whom have weakened immune systems in hospitals and healthcare facilities such as nursing homes.

How is it spread?

MRSA bacteria can spread by:

- Touching the infected skin or wound of anyone who has MRSA.
- Sharing objects such as towels or athletic equipment with someone who has MRSA.

MRSA is almost always spread through physical contact, not through the air. Some people may have MRSA in their nose. Therefore, the bacteria can be spread by touching the nose and then someone else.

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

MRSA skin infections appear as a bump or the infected area might be:

- Swollen
- Painful
- Red
- Warm to touch
- Full of pus or other types of drainage
- Can be accompanied by a fever

How is MRSA treated?

Since MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics, it can be hard to treat. However, some antibiotics can successfully cure MRSA infections.

It is important to take all doses of the antibiotic even if an infection is getting better. The last few pills kill the toughest germs. A person’s doctor should be notified if the infection does not get better in a few days or if a patient begins to feel worse.

The people whom are carriers of MRSA in their nose, do not have symptoms of an infection and usually do not need treatment. However, they should be aware of how to protect themselves and others from becoming sick.

How is it prevented?

Personal Hygiene:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
- Do not share personal items like towels, wash cloths, razors, or clothing
- Persons with MRSA should not participate in contact sports or swimming until the wounds have healed completely, and they have clearance from their health care provider.

Wound care:

- Seek medical care immediately at the first signs of infection (red, swollen, painful, draining pus).
- Keep wounds clean and cover with a dry bandage, especially if the wound is draining.
- Avoid contact with the wounds and bandages of another person.
- Throw away soiled bandages.

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- Follow health care provider's instructions on proper wound care.

Laundry:

- Wash clothes, towels, and sheets using laundry detergent with the water temperature set at the hottest setting.
- Dry the laundered items in a dryer at the hottest suitable temperature. Do not line dry.

Cleaning:

- Frequently clean and disinfect high-touch or soiled surfaces such as door knobs and phones.
- Shared sports equipment should be cleaned between each use.