



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?

Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (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 who have weakened immune systems in hospitals and healthcare facilities such as nursing homes. The risk increases with activities or places that involve crowding, skin-to-skin contact, and shared equipment or supplies.

How does MRSA 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

What are the symptoms of MRSA?

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

- Swollen
- Painful
- Red
- Warm to touch
- Full of pus or other types of drainage

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 who 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 cuts, scrapes, and wounds clean and cover with a dry bandage, especially if the wound is draining until healed
- Avoid contact with the wounds and bandages of another person.
- Throw away soiled bandages

- 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 doorknobs and phones.
- Shared sports equipment should be cleaned between each use