



Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of infection caused by the bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus* (or *S. aureus*). *Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "Staph," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Some strains of *S. aureus* are resistant to a class of antibiotics frequently used to treat Staph infections such as methicillin (which is a synthetic form of penicillin)—and thus are called Methicillin-Resistant *Staph aureus* (or MRSA).

Who is at risk of getting MRSA?

S. aureus (or Staph) including MRSA can be spread among people having close contact with an infected person. MRSA is almost always spread by direct physical contact and not through the air. However, spread may also occur through indirect contact by touching objects (e.g., towels, sheets, wound dressings, clothes, workout areas, or sports equipment) contaminated with Staph bacteria or MRSA.

Staph bacteria can live on the skin or in the nose of healthy individuals without causing any symptoms of disease. This is known as colonization and MRSA can also be carried in this way. However, injury to the skin (e.g. scrape or cut) can allow an opportunity for bacteria to enter the skin and cause an infection.

Infections caused by Staph or MRSA are usually mild, limited to the surface of the skin, and can be treated successfully with proper hygiene and antibiotics. In rare cases, if left untreated or not recognized early, MRSA infections can be difficult to treat and can progress to life-threatening blood or bone infections because there are fewer effective antibiotics available for treatment.

MRSA infections occur most commonly among persons in hospitals and healthcare facilities. However, MRSA can cause illness in persons outside of hospitals and healthcare facilities as well. Cases of MRSA infection in the community setting (e.g. day care centers, schools, prisons) are called Community-Associated Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* and have been associated with un-necessary antibiotic use, sharing contaminated personal items, reoccurring skin infections, and living in crowded settings.

General Recommendations

Any infection or draining wound could pose a threat to others. For a person with MRSA infection, certain infection control measures should be in place. These measures include, but may not be limited to:

- Keep infections, particularly those that produce pus or drainage, covered with clean, dry bandages. Person should follow the healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain bacteria, including MRSA, and spread the bacteria to others. Bandages should be disposed of in a manner such that other people cannot have contact with the drainage (e.g., in a closed plastic bag).
- Advise those who may have contact with the infected wound to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and warm water. Anyone who expects to have contact with the infected wound should wear disposable gloves, and wash their hands after removing the gloves. Hand washing is the single most important measure to prevent MRSA transmission.
- Avoid sharing personal items (e.g., towels, washcloths, and clothing) that may have come in contact with the infected wound. Wash soiled linens and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent. Drying clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying, also helps kill bacteria.
- Clean potentially contaminated surfaces carefully with a disinfectant or a bleach-water solution (1:10 dilution of sodium hypochlorite, which is approximately 1 cup of 5.25% household chlorine bleach to 1 gallon of water) after caring for the wound.

People who are infected with MRSA should follow the healthcare provider's treatment plan, including completion of any antibiotics prescribed.

For additional information about MRSA please visit the CDC website;
http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca_public.html