

# **MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)**

## **What is MRSA?**

*Staphylococcus aureus*, often referred to simply as "**staph**," are bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Approximately 25% to 30% of the population is colonized (when bacteria are present, but not causing an infection) in the nose with staph bacteria. Sometimes, staph can cause an infection. Most of these skin infections are minor (such as pimples and boils) and can be treated without antibiotics (also known as antimicrobials or antibacterials). Some staph bacteria are resistant to antibiotics. **MRSA** is a type of staph that is **resistant to antibiotics** such as methicillin, oxacillin, penicillin and amoxicillin. Staph bacteria are one of the most common causes of skin infections in the United States.

## **What type of infections does MRSA cause?**

Most MRSA infections are skin infections that may appear as pustules or boils which often are red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. These skin infections commonly occur at sites of visible skin trauma, such as cuts and abrasions, and areas of the body covered by hair (e.g., back of neck, groin, buttock, armpit, beard area of men).

Almost all MRSA skin infections can be effectively treated by drainage of pus with or without antibiotics. More serious infections, such as pneumonia, bloodstream infections, or bone infections, are very rare in healthy people who get MRSA skin infections.

## **How is MRSA transmitted?**

MRSA is usually transmitted by direct skin-to-skin contact or contact with shared items or surfaces that have come into contact with someone else's infection (e.g., towels, used bandages).

## **How can I prevent staph or MRSA skin infections?**

### **Practice good hygiene:**

- 1. The single most effective method of preventing MRSA is washing your hands thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.**
2. Shower immediately after exercise.
3. Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
4. Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
5. Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors that come into contact with your bare skin.
6. Use a barrier, such as a towel, between your skin and shared equipment. Example: weight benches, gym mats.

## **When Should I see the School Nurse?**

1. Anytime that you have an injury which breaks the skin.
2. If you have a wound that doesn't heal within 5 days to a week.

## **I have an MRSA skin infection. How do I prevent spreading it to others?**

1. **Wash your hands frequently.** You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
2. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Take all of the medication that your doctor prescribes for you unless he/she tells you otherwise.
3. Cover your wound. Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph, including MRSA, so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be discarded with the regular trash.
4. Do not share personal items. Avoid sharing personal items, such as towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, or uniforms that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage. Wash sheets, towels, and clothes that become soiled with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely. <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>[Center for Disease Control and Prevention](http://www.cdc.gov/mrsa/patient)

## **CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL MRSA PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET**

### **MRSA-Got A Bug Pamphlet**