



Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA)

What is Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*?

Staphylococcus aureus or Staph is a type of bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose of healthy people. Staph bacteria are the most common cause of skin infections. Some Staph, known as Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA, are resistant to certain antibiotics, making them harder to treat.

Who can get a Staph infection?

Anyone can get a Staph infection. This happens when the bacteria enter the skin through a cut or sore or through medical equipment such as a breathing tube or catheter. Staph infections, including MRSA, are most common in people in hospitals and health care facilities who have weakened immune systems. MRSA infections in people who have not been recently hospitalized or who have not had a medical procedure (dialysis, surgery) are called Community-Acquired MRSA (CA-MRSA).

People most likely to get a Staph infection are those who have:

- Skin to skin contact with someone who has a Staph infection.
- Contact with items or surfaces that have Staph on them, such as contaminated tissues, towels used by another person, shared razors or sports equipment by multiple people.
- Openings in their skin, such as cuts or scrapes.
- Crowded living conditions.
- Poor hygiene.

What are the symptoms of a Staph infection or MRSA?

Staph or MRSA symptoms usually show up as skin infections and can occur on otherwise healthy people. These skin infections may look like a pimple or boil and can be red, swollen, painful, or have pus or other drainage. More serious infections may cause pneumonia, bloodstream infections or surgical wound infections.

How can I prevent Staph or MRSA skin infections?

Practice good hygiene:

- Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered with a bandage until healed.
- Avoid contact with other people's wounds or bandages.
- Avoid sharing personal items such as towels or razors.

What should I do if I think I have a Staph or MRSA infection?

See your health care provider as soon as possible.

Are Staph and MRSA infections treatable?

Yes. Most Staph and MRSA infections are treatable. If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better, unless your doctor tells you to stop taking it.

If I have a Staph, or MRSA skin infection, what can I do to prevent others from getting infected?

- Cover your wound with clean, dry bandages. Follow your health care provider's instructions.
- Clean your hands frequently, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- Don't share personal items that may have had contact with the infected wound or bandage.
- Wash sheets, towels and clothes with hot water and laundry detergent.
- Tell any health care provider you see that you have or have had a Staph or MRSA skin infections.

For more information, contact the Guilford County Department of Public Health at 641-7777 or www.guilfordhealth.org

