



Staph Infections

What is a staph infection?

A staph infection is an infection caused by the bacteria, *Staphylococcus aureus* (*S.aureus*). Staph bacteria are commonly found on skin and in noses of healthy people. Staph bacteria can cause skin infections like pimples, boils and impetigo, which are easily treated. Some staph infections can cause serious and sometimes fatal infections. These infections are usually treated with antibiotics, but over the past 50 years, staph infections have become resistant to some antibiotics.

What are VISA and VRSA?

VISA and VRSA are two types of staph bacteria that are increasingly resistant to antibiotics, particularly vancomycin. VISA stands for vancomycin-intermediate *S. aureus*. VRSA stands for vancomycin-resistant *S. aureus*.

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of staph bacteria that is resistant to methicillin, another type of antibiotic. MRSA stands for methicillin-resistant *S. aureus*.

Who is more likely to get a staph infection?

Persons:

- with other health conditions such as diabetes and kidney disease;
- who are IV drug users;
- with open wounds;
- who have contact with others with open wounds (e.g., athletes participating in contact sports, caregivers);
- with previous infections involving resistant bacteria;
- with tubes going into their bodies (e.g., IV catheters);
- who have recently been a patient in a hospital or other care facilities; and
- who are living in crowded conditions.

In addition, newborns and the elderly are more susceptible.

How do you treat antibiotic-resistant staph infections?

There are some antibiotics for treatment of these infections. Choice of antibiotic will depend on allergies, the age, health of the patient and type of infection suspected.

How can you prevent the spread of staph bacteria?

- Practicing good hygiene, like hand washing, can prevent staph bacteria from spreading.
- Health care providers should wash their hands and wear gloves before and after contact with patients and their body fluids. Early diagnosis and treatment of staph infections are also keys to reducing the spread of the bacteria.
- Persons visiting hospitals should avoid close physical contact with patients, wash their hands often with soap and water, and avoid contact with the patient's wounds or bandages contaminated by the wounds. Also, persons should not share personal hygiene products with others.
- Persons with staph skin infections should bathe daily with antibacterial soap and a washcloth.

Can animals get staph infections?

Like humans, animals can carry the bacteria without signs or symptoms. They may also have skin, eye, ear or respiratory infections caused by staph bacteria. Animals can easily spread staph to other animals or to humans.

For more information, visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website at www.cdc.gov or call the Guilford County Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Division at 336-641-7777.