



MRSA - Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* Information for Patients

General information

- *Staphylococcus aureus* (Staf-lo-**coc**-cus **aw**-ree-us (staph) is a germ that often lives in the noses and on the skin of healthy people and spreads from person to person on contaminated hands, skin, and objects.
- Most infections caused by staph are skin infections, but staph can also cause more serious infections such as blood and joint infections, and pneumonia.
- Some staph called MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant *Staph aureus*) cannot be killed by certain antibiotics – called beta lactams – which are commonly used to treat staph.

What to do to Prevent Staph Skin Infections

- Keep your hands clean by washing well with soap and water or using an alcohol hand gel.
- 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 to do if You have a Staph Skin Infection

- Cover your wound. Keep wounds that are draining or have pus covered with clean, dry bandages. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain staph. So keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages or tape can be thrown away with the regular trash.
- Wash your hands. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands often with soap and warm water. You can use an alcohol hand gel when soap and water are not available. This is especially important to do after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- 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 soiled sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Dry clothes in a hot dryer, rather than air-drying. This also helps kill bacteria in clothes.
- Talk to your doctor. Tell any healthcare providers who treat you that you have or had a staph skin infection. If the type of staph infection you have is MRSA, be sure to tell them this as well.

What does a Staph or MRSA Infection Look Like?

- Staph bacteria, including MRSA, can cause skin infections that 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.

What Factors are Associated with Increased Risk for Community-Associated Staph or MRSA Infections?

- Factors that have been associated with the spread of MRSA skin infections include: close skin-to-skin contact, openings in the skin such as cuts or abrasions, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene.

For more information, visit www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters,
or call CDC at 800-CDC-INFO (English and Spanish) or 888-232-6348 (TTY).