

STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS AND METHICILLIN-RESISTANT STAPHYLOCOCCUS AUREUS (MRSA) INFECTIONS

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose of healthy individuals. The name Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) is used for the drug resistant strain of the bacteria. This infection may lead to internal organ involvement.

What are the symptoms of a MRSA infection?

A “staph” infection, including MRSA, can appear as a pimple, rash, boil or an open wound that does not heal on its own. Symptoms of a MRSA infection may include redness, warmth, swelling, pus and tenderness of the skin. Some people may also have fever and chills.

How are MRSA infections spread?

Anyone can get a MRSA infection. MRSA is most commonly spread through direct physical contact (skin-to-skin) with an infected person. Poor hand washing plays an important role in the spread of the bacteria. A person can also become infected by touching or sharing objects that have been contaminated (such as towels, bed sheets, clothes, razors and even athletic equipment).

How can I prevent others and myself from getting a MRSA infection?

- *Wash hands* frequently with soap and warm water, especially after changing your own bandages or the bandages of another person
- Do not share personal items (such as: razors, towels, bed sheets, clothes, deodorant, sporting equipment)
- Wash all cuts, scratches and abrasions with soap and water. Keep them covered with a clean, dry bandage until healed
- Avoid contact with any open wounds and cuts
- Wash soiled towels, bed sheets and clothes in hot water with soap and bleach. Dry clothes in a hot dryer; heat helps kill the bacteria
- Never touch, squeeze or pop any boils. This can spread the bacteria to other parts of your body or to other people. The pus is full of bacteria.
- Keep all common areas, like bathrooms and kitchens clean. A water and bleach cleaning solution (9 parts water, 1 part bleach prepared daily with cool water) will kill the bacteria.

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

See a healthcare provider as soon as possible. MRSA infections are treatable. Do not try to drain, pop or squeeze any boils, pimples or other pus-filled skin infections. Early treatment can help keep the infection from getting worse. Depending on how serious the infection is, your doctor may drain the fluid and send a sample for laboratory testing. The doctor will probably bandage the infected area and may prescribe antibiotics. Follow all of the doctor’s instructions, even if you begin to feel better or the infection looks like it is healing, to prevent the infection coming back or becoming worse.

Children and adults should not be in school/daycare or at work until 24 hrs after initiation of antibiotic treatment. In addition he/she must keep the lesions covered while in the facility.

Clusters of two or more persons are considered a **reportable disease** to the Santa Rosa County Health Department (SRCHD).

For more information on MRSA, please contact the SRCHD at 850-983-5200.

