



Banner Thunderbird
Medical Center

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What is MRSA?

Staphylococci or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose, usually without causing harm. MRSA - or Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* - is a strain of staph bacteria that has become resistant to several types of antibiotics. MRSA can live on the skin surface, in the nose, and also in the lungs and urine, and can cause infections such as boils, wound infections, or pneumonia. MRSA may make people sick, especially in the debilitated or elderly and in people with weakened immune systems

What is Community-Associated MRSA?

Community-associated MRSA (CA-MRSA) is a different strain of MRSA that is found in the community in people who do not have the usual risk factors for acquiring a Staph infection. CA-MRSA infections are usually manifested as skin infections, such as pimples and boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

Are certain people more at risk for community-associated staff or MRSA infections?

Cluster outbreaks of CA-MRSA have occurred in athletes, Native Americans, homeless youth, men who have sex with men, jail inmates, military recruits, and child care centers, but individual cases are now more commonly seen.

How common is Community-Associated MRSA?

Since 1999 there has been a surge of CA-MRSA infections, both in the United States and globally.

What does a staph or MRSA infection look like?

MRSA bacteria are found mainly on the skin, in the nose, in wounds, or in blood or urine. They can also be found in other body sites also. It is most likely to cause infection when a person has a break in the skin or other openings where bacteria can get inside the body. Common skin conditions caused by MRSA include:

- Infected cuts
- Boils
- Infected hair follicles

- Fluid filled blisters (impetigo)
- Skin sores that look like insect bites

Minor MRSA infections can sometimes develop serious complications such as spread of infection to surrounding tissues, abscesses, or blood, bone, or heart infections.

Are these infections treatable?

Since MRSA is resistant to many antibiotics, it can be hard to treat. However, there are some antibiotics that can successfully cure MRSA infections. If an antibiotic is prescribed by your doctor, it is important to take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better. The last few pills kill the toughest germs. Tell your doctor if your infection does not get better in a few days or if you begin to feel worse.

Some people can carry MRSA in their nose but do not have symptoms of an infection – this is called colonization. These people usually do not need treatment, but should be aware of how to protect themselves and others from becoming sick.

How can staph or MRSA infections be prevented?

The best way to prevent MRSA is to wash your hands often with soap and water. If you don't have access to soap and water, you can kill the MRSA or Staph germs by using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing >60% alcohol.

You also must think about where MRSA bacteria are on your body. If you have a skin infection, you should keep the area covered with dry bandages and clothing, if possible. Change the bandage often, especially if the bandage gets wet. Make sure any drainage (pus or fluid) that comes out of your wound does not get onto other people or objects that others might touch. After you touch your infected site or dress your wound, wash your hands immediately with soap and water.

If MRSA is in your lungs, cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough. Throw the tissue in a wastebasket and wash your hands. If MRSA is in your urine, be sure to clean your bathroom well. If other people handle your urine, they should use gloves and wash their hands well afterwards.

Preventing the Spread of MRSA in the Home

- Clean surfaces and other commonly touched areas (doorknobs, light switches, etc) with a disinfectant often.
- If body fluids such as wound drainage get onto surfaces, clean and disinfect these surfaces well.
- Do not share towels, razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items.
- Change your sheets often, especially if you have a draining wound.
- When picking up dirty linen or clothing, hold it away from your body to prevent MRSA germs from getting onto your clothing. If linens or clothing are contaminated

with body fluids such as wound drainage, wash them separately from the rest of the family's clothing

- Use hot water and bleach for laundry. Using a hot dryer can also help kill bacteria.
- Contaminated waste items, such as bandages and tissues, can be thrown out in your normal garbage.
- To prevent others from coming in contact with this garbage, make sure it is in a securely tied plastic bag.