



Health News

From The
DCF Medical Team

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus*)

What is MRSA?

MRSA is a type of *Staphylococcus aurea* (Staph) bacteria that is resistant to certain antibiotics. Staph is a bacteria commonly carried on the skin or in the nose. While 25-30% of the U.S. population carries Staph at any time, only 1% is colonized. Colonization is when the person has no signs or symptoms of infection or illness.

How is MRSA spread?

- ❖ Touching the infected skin of someone who has a MRSA infection.
- ❖ Using personal items of someone who has a MRSA infection, such as towels, razors or athletic equipment.
- ❖ Touching objects that have MRSA on their surface.
- ❖ Being in crowded places where germs are easily spread, such as hospitals, daycares, dorms or gyms.

Is MRSA bacteria different from other Staph bacteria?

- ❖ Yes, because it cannot be treated with antibiotics that are normally used to treat Staph infections. An antibiotic that is specific to the MRSA bacteria must be used.
- ❖ MRSA is just like Staph in almost every other way:
 - It can be carried on the skin or in the nose and usually not cause an infection or illness;
 - It can cause minor skin infections that go away without any special medical treatment;
 - It is spread the same way as other Staph; and
 - The symptoms are the same as other Staph infections.

What are the symptoms of an infection caused by MRSA?

- ❖ Sores that look and feel like spider bites.
- ❖ Large, red, painful bumps under the skin (called boils).
- ❖ A cut that is swollen, hot and filled with pus.
- ❖ Blisters that are filled with honey colored fluid that may itch or hurt (called impetigo).

When should I seek medical care?

- ❖ If you think you have a MRSA infection. Your health care provider will take lab tests from the infected area (culture) to determine which, if any, antibiotic is required. They may also take blood tests.
- ❖ You have new symptoms during or after treatment.
- ❖ The infection does not get better, gets worse or returns.

How are MRSA infections treated?

- ❖ Drain the infection: **do NOT do this yourself**. After you must keep the area covered until it's healed.
- ❖ Antibiotics: take the dose exactly as prescribed and take all that are prescribed, even if you feel better.
- ❖ Reduce the amount of bacteria on your skin or in your nose. For a time, your doctor may want you to shower daily with an antibacterial soap and put an antibiotic ointment into your nose.

How can I prevent a Staph or MRSA infection?

- ❖ Keep your hands clean either with soap and warm water or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❖ Keep cuts and scrapes clean and covered and avoid contact with other people's wounds and bandages.
- ❖ Avoid sharing personal items such as towels, toothbrushes and razors.
- ❖ Use a barrier (such as a towel) when using athletic equipment and wipe surfaces before and after use.
- ❖ Keep your skin healthy, and avoid getting dry, cracked skin.

References:

www.cdc.gov/ncidod/dhqp/ar_mrsa_ca.html

www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/cdc/antibiotic/mrsa_factsheet.pdf