

MRSA

PUBLIC HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as “staph,” is a common type of bacteria that is found on the skin and in the nose of healthy persons. Staph bacteria may cause minor skin infections such as boils or more serious infections such as pneumonia and blood poisoning.

Certain “staph” bacteria that have become resistant to antibiotics are called MRSA. MRSA infections are more difficult to treat, but usually respond to incision and drainage and/or antibiotics.

How is MRSA spread from person to person?

MRSA is usually spread through direct physical contact with an infected person, but may also be transmitted through contact with contaminated objects or surfaces. MRSA is not spread by coughing unless the infected person has pneumonia.

Although in most situations you will not know if a surface has been cleaned, it’s important to remember that most surfaces do not pose a risk of spreading staph and MRSA.

How can I prevent becoming infected with MRSA?

- **Wash your hands** thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - At a minimum, hands should be cleaned before and after playing sports and activities such as using shared weight-training equipment, when caring for wounds including changing bandages, and after using the toilet.
 - If hands are not visibly dirty and sinks are not available for hand washing, for example, while in the weight-room, alcohol-based hand rubs and sanitizers can be used. Alcohol-based hand rubs with at least 60% alcohol content are preferred
- Never touch another person’s wounds, infected skin, or dirty bandages.
- Don’t scratch skin rashes.
- Maintain excellent personal hygiene
- Don’t ever share personal hygiene items with others, including toiletries and towels
- Clean off any surfaces shared with others
- Use a towel or shirt as a barrier between your skin and shared equipment or surfaces
- Shower immediately after activities where you have direct skin contact with people or shared surfaces such as after exercising at a health club. Both plain and antimicrobial soap are effective for hand washing, but liquid soap is preferred over bar soap in these settings to limit sharing.
- Wash your uniform and clothing after each use. Follow the clothing label's instructions for washing and drying. Drying clothes completely in a dryer is preferred.
- Don’t use injection drugs

How does a person know that he or she has a MRSA infection?

Culturing pus from a skin infection is the most common way to detect MRSA

Can MRSA be treated?

MRSA skin infections are often treated first with frequent warm soaks and draining the wound. Strong antibiotics can be effective in treating MRSA. Serious or highly resistant MRSA infections may require intravenous (IV) antibiotics in the hospital.

What to do if you think you have MRSA

- Tell your healthcare provider and employer if you think you have an infection so it can be treated quickly.
- Pay attention for signs of infections such as redness, warmth, swelling, pus, and pain at sites where your skin has sores, abrasions, or cuts. Sometimes these infections can be confused with spider bites.
- Infections can also occur at sites covered by body hair or where uniforms or equipment cause skin irritation or increased rubbing.
- Do not try to treat the infection yourself by picking or popping the sore.
- Cover possible infections with clean, dry bandages until you can be seen by a healthcare provider (e.g., doctor, nurse, athletic trainer).

How to Prevent Spreading MRSA if you have MRSA

- Get medical care for your infection. Do not try to treat it yourself.
- Cover your wounds. Keep wounds covered with clean, dry bandages until healed. Follow your healthcare provider's instructions on proper care of the wound. Pus from infected wounds can contain MRSA so keeping the infection covered will help prevent the spread to others. Bandages and tape can be thrown away with the regular trash.
- Clean your hands often. You, your family, and others in close contact should wash their hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub, especially after changing the bandage or touching the infected wound.
- Do not share personal items. Personal items include towels, washcloths, razors, clothing, and uniforms. Wash used sheets, towels, and clothes with water and laundry detergent. Use a dryer to dry clothes completely.

Always seek medical attention if you develop a boil, red or inflamed skin, insect or spider bite, or a sore that does not go away.

Information obtained from the CDC

For more information on MRSA, call (816) 325-7204

For additional copies, visit our website at <http://www.ci.independence.mo.us/Health>