

Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)

PERSONAL HEALTH FACT SHEET

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose, usually without causing harm. MRSA is a type of staph infection that is resistant to antibiotics that are typically used to treat this disease.

How is MRSA spread?

MRSA bacteria can spread by:

- ◆ touching the infected skin or wound of anyone who has MRSA
- ◆ sharing objects such as towels or athletic equipment with someone who has MRSA

MRSA is almost always spread through physical contact, not through the air. If you have MRSA in your nose, you can spread the bacteria just by touching your nose and then someone else.

How is MRSA treated?

Since MRSA is often resistant to many antibiotics, it can be hard to treat. However, some antibiotics can successfully cure MRSA infections. It is important to take all of the doses of your antibiotic even if the infection is getting better. The last few pills kill the toughest germs.

How can MRSA be prevented?

The best way to prevent MRSA is to practice good hygiene which will help prevent skin infections. Keep your hands clean by washing thoroughly with soap and water. You should also avoid sharing personal items such as towels and razors, and contact your doctor if you think you may have an infection.

If you have a skin infection, you should keep the area covered with a dry bandage 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, wash your hands immediately.

What does an MRSA infection look like?

- It may look like a pimple, or a boil and can be red, swollen, painful and have pus or other drainage.

- It is often misdiagnosed as a spider bite.

- MRSA-infected skin lesions (sores) can change from skin or surface irritations to abscesses or serious skin infections.

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