



MRSA Overview

WHAT IS MRSA?

MRSA is an infection caused by the *Staphylococcus aureus* bacteria—commonly referred to as “staph.”

Approximately 25—30% of the population carries the staph bacteria, usually on the skin or in the nose. These bacteria can usually live on your skin without doing any harm. When a break in the skin occurs, however, they can get into your body and cause a MRSA infection.

MRSA—which is short for “Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*”— is a strain of staph infection that is resistant to the broad-spectrum antibiotics commonly used to treat it.

MRSA infections may spread from one person to another by skin-to-skin contact and from sharing items such as towels, soap, clothes, bedding and sports equipment.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

MRSA infections may start out as small red bumps that resemble pimples or boils, but can quickly turn into deep, painful abscesses that require draining.

If the MRSA infection penetrates into the body, it may cause life-threatening infections in the bones, joints, lungs, heart or bloodstream.

WHAT IS HEALTHCARE-ASSOCIATED MRSA?

MRSA occurs most often in hospitals or other healthcare settings, such as nursing homes or dialysis centers. This is known as **healthcare-associated MRSA** or **HA-MRSA**. Individuals at greatest risk for contracting healthcare-associated infections include older adults and people who have weakened immune systems. Types of healthcare-associated MRSA infections include surgical wound infections, bloodstream infections or pneumonia.

WHAT IS COMMUNITY-ASSOCIATED MRSA?

MRSA can also cause illness in people outside of hospital or healthcare settings. MRSA infections in people who have **not** been recently hospitalized or undergone a medical procedure are known as **community-associated MRSA** or **CA-MRSA**. Community-acquired MRSA infections usually manifest themselves as skin infections, such as pimples or boils, and occur in otherwise healthy people.

WHAT IF I THINK I HAVE MRSA?

See your healthcare provider immediately for appropriate testing.

IS MRSA TREATABLE?

Yes. MRSA infections still respond to certain antibiotics and in some cases, antibiotic treatment may not even be necessary. For example, your physician may treat a superficial boil or abscess by draining it rather than treating the infection with antibiotics.

If you are given antibiotics, it is important to take all of the doses (even if the infection is getting better) unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise.

If the infection does not improve after a few days, contact your healthcare provider. If other people you know or live with contract the same infection, encourage them to seek medical treatment.

HOW CAN I PROTECT OTHERS?

If you have a MRSA infection:

- Cover your wound
- Keep your hands clean
- Do not share personal items
- Inform your healthcare provider
- If you are prescribed antibiotics take all of your medication

QUICK FACTS:

The best way to prevent skin infections is simple — **wash your hands!** Washing your hands often with soap and warm water not only helps to prevent skin infections, but also helps to combat colds and flu.

WHAT TO DO:

Wash cuts, scrapes and sores with soap and water, then keep them clean and dry. Use a bandage to cover them until they have healed.

- Avoid contact with other people's cuts or sores and any materials that have come in contact with them
- Avoid sharing personal items such as soap, towels and razors
- Clean and wash sports clothes and equipment after each use

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF:

You have signs of infection, such as pain, redness, swelling, or oozing pus or blood, or if you develop new symptoms during or after treatment.