

Staphylococcus aureus is a group of bacteria, often called “staph”. Like many other bacteria staph can be found anywhere. People can have staph on their skin and in their noses without it making them sick. However, staph can cause illness if it enters the body through a cut or scrape in the skin. This is why it is so important to wash cuts and scrapes with mild soap and water – to prevent infection.

Over the years, a form of staph developed that is resistant to some of the drugs (antibiotics) used to treat it. This form of staph is known as methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* or MRSA.

SYMPTOMS

MRSA infection of the skin often looks like a pimple or boil on the skin. It can be red, swollen, painful, warm to the touch and full of pus. MRSA infection may cause a fever.

TREATMENT

Do not try to treat an MRSA skin infection yourself. You could make it worse or spread it to others. Do not pop or drain the blister or use disinfectants on the area. If you think you might have an infection, cover the area with a band aid, wash your hands, and call your doctor. A doctor may treat a MRSA skin infection by draining the infection and, in some cases, giving you an antibiotic.

If you are given an antibiotic, take all of the doses, even if the infection is getting better. Do not share antibiotics with other people or save them for use at another time.

If the MRSA infection does not get better a few days after going to your doctor, call her again. If other people you know or live with get an infection that looks like yours, tell them to go to their doctor.

It is possible to get MRSA more than once.

HOW MRSA SPREADS

MRSA infections are most often spread by having contact with another person’s infection, through personal items that touched their infected skin (like towels, bandages, or razors) or by touching things (like bandages) that are contaminated with MRSA.

The spread of MRSA skin infections is more likely when there is close skin-to-skin contact, cuts or scratches in the skin, contaminated items and surfaces, crowded living conditions, and poor hygiene. People may have more risk of becoming infected in athletic facilities, dorms, barracks, crowded homes, jails, daycare centers and hospitals.

HOW TO PREVENT MRSA—READ THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS PAGE

how to prevent

MRSA (Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)

Don't Share Personal Items

Don't share washcloths, towels, razors, uniforms or clothes. MRSA can spread from person to person on these items.

Clean and Cover Cuts and Scrapes

Clean cuts and scrapes with mild soap and water. Cover open sores with bandages until they heal. This helps keep germs from spreading.

Keep Athletic Equipment Clean

Wash uniforms after each use. Wipe down equipment that cannot be washed with alcohol (like helmets). Don't share athletic equipment or uniforms.

Take Antibiotics as Prescribed

Take all of the medications your doctor prescribes. Don't stop taking them when you start to feel better. Don't save antibiotics for later or share them with others.

Handwashing

Wash hands often, especially after touching shared items or visiting people in the hospital or other healthcare setting.

MORE ABOUT HANDWASHING

How to Wash



1. Wet



2. Soap



3. Scrub 15 –20 seconds



4. Rinse



5. Dry



6. Use towel to turn off faucet

WHEN TO WASH

- Before and after eating
- Before, during and after making and touching food
- After using the bathroom or helping a child use the bathroom
- After changing or checking a diaper
- After coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose and after wiping a child's nose
- After touching blood or body fluids (urine, feces, vomit, etc)
- After touching animals or their waste
- After touching trash
- After touching money
- Whenever hands look, feel or smell dirty

Washing hands is the best way to prevent the spread of many illnesses. No soap and water? Use a hand sanitizer made with alcohol (follow package directions) – then wash with soap and water as soon as you can.