

MRSA (Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus)

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, also called staph, is a type of germ known as bacteria. Many healthy people have this germ on their skin and in their nose. Staph germs most often cause an infection on the skin as lesions, pimples or boils. The infection can get into a surgical site, in the blood or cause pneumonia. If the infection gets worse, the signs may be tiredness, nausea or vomiting, shortness of breath, chest pain or skipped heart beats.

Methicillin resistant staphylococcus aureus, or MRSA, is a type of staph infection that is hard to treat because it cannot be killed by many common antibiotics. MRSA can infect any part of the body. MRSA is becoming a more common infection.

How is MRSA spread?

Anyone can get a staph infection, but people are at higher risk if they have:

- Skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a staph infection.
- Contact with items and surfaces that have the staph germ on them. This could be sports equipment, tattoo needles or other equipment.
- Cuts or scrapes on their skin.
- Crowded living conditions, such as schools, extended care facilities, military bases, some people's homes or prisons.
- A lot of physical contact such as sports teams.
- Poor hygiene.

Testing for MRSA

See a doctor if you or your child has a skin wound that is not healing or if there are signs of an infection, such as fever, pain, redness, warmth, swelling or drainage from skin wounds.

The doctor may collect a sample of drainage or tissue from the area and send it to a lab to test for MRSA. A blood sample may also be taken to check for MRSA in the blood. The lab test can also tell which antibiotic will be best to treat MRSA.

Babies or children placed in Intensive Care Units (ICUs) are often tested for MRSA.

How is MRSA treated?

Most staph infections, including MRSA, can be treated with certain antibiotics.

- If your doctor prescribes an antibiotic, it is **very important to take all the medicine** as ordered, even if the infection is getting better.
- If an ointment is prescribed, apply it to **all** skin lesions, even the tiny ones.
- If there is a skin infection, your doctor may make an incision to drain the infection. If so, you may have a home health nurse or need to learn to do dressing changes on the wound. Be sure to follow your doctor's instructions.
- Sometimes your doctor may order special antibacterial ointment to be placed in the nose or a special soap for bathing.
- **Do not** take part in contact sports until the infection has healed.
- Call your doctor if your infection does not get better with treatment.

How do I prevent the spread of MRSA?

To prevent the spread of MRSA and other bacteria:

- Wash with soap and water or use alcohol hand sanitizer on hands often, especially after touching a skin lesion.

- Keep any cuts or lesions clean. Keep them covered with clean, dry bandages until healed.
- Do not touch other people's cuts or bandages.
- Do not share personal items like towels, razors, clothing or equipment.
- Clean surfaces where bare skin rubs such as exercise equipment, wrestling mats and surfaces in the home.
- Take a shower with soap after working out or playing sports.

When should I call a doctor?

Call a doctor if:

- You or your child's condition becomes worse – the infected area has increased swelling, pain or redness.
- You or your child develops a fever, has trouble breathing or has other signs of illness such as vomiting, diarrhea or always sleeping.
- Another family member develops new skin lesions.
- Your child will not take the medicine prescribed.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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