



## **MRSA Fact Sheet**

### **(Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus aureus*)**

#### **What is MRSA?**

Staphylococci or “staph” are bacteria that live on the skin and in the nose, usually without causing harm. MRSA is a type of staph. It is resistant to several types of antibiotics. Bacteria develop resistance to antibiotics when antibiotics are used often.

#### **Who gets MRSA?**

Anyone can get MRSA. It is found most often among people in hospitals and healthcare facilities (such as nursing homes) who have weakened immune systems. In schools it is spread in the athletic departments via dirty laundry.

#### **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.

#### **What do MRSA infections look like?**

MRSA bacteria are found mainly on the skin, in the nose, in wounds, or in blood and urine. They can also be found in other body sites. It is most likely to cause infection when a person has a break in the skin or other openings where bacteria can get inside the body.

Common skin conditions caused by MRSA include:

- Infected cuts
- Boils
- Infected hair follicles
- Fluid filled blisters (impetigo)
- Skin sores that look like insect bites



Minor MRSA infections can sometimes develop serious complications such as spread of infection to surrounding tissues, abscesses, or blood, bone, or heart infections.

#### **How is MRSA treated?**

Since MRSA is 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.

### **Do you need to do anything special when the infection is gone?**

After the infection has cleared up, MRSA bacteria may still be living in your nose. Continue with precautions to prevent spreading the MRSA bacteria from your nose to other people. If your infection comes back or if you have a similar new infection later, cover the area with a bandage (if it is a skin infection). See a doctor as soon as possible. Tell the doctor that you have had MRSA in the past.

### **How can MRSA be prevented?**

- **Wash your hands often** - Soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer.
- Keep skin infections covered with dry bandages and clothing.
- If MRSA is in your lungs, cover your mouth with a tissue when you cough.
- If MRSA is in your urine, be sure to clean your bathroom well.
- If other people handle your urine, they should use gloves and wash their hands well afterwards.

### **Preventing the spread of MRSA in the home**

- Clean surfaces and commonly touched areas with a disinfectant often.
- Do not share towels, razors, toothbrushes, or other personal items.
- Change your sheets often, especially if you have a draining wound.
- Hold soiled laundry away from your body.
- Wash contaminated laundry separately from the rest of the family's clothing.
- Use hot water and bleach for laundry. Using a hot dryer can also help kill bacteria.
- Place contaminated waste items, such as bandages and tissues, in tied plastic garbage bag.



### **Preventing the spread of MRSA in the community**

People with active MRSA infections should stay home until they are able to completely contain the drainage with bandages. If you must leave your home:

- Cover all sores with clean, dry bandages and clothing if possible.
- Carry alcohol based hand cleaner with you so you can clean your hands if water is not available.
- Do not use public gyms. School children should not take part in contact sports.
- Do not use a public sauna, hot tub or pool.
- Avoid personal care services (haircut, manicure, massage).