

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 very common infection.

How is MRSA spread?

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

- Have skin-to-skin contact with someone who has a staph infection.
- Have contact with items or surfaces that have the staph germ on them. This could be sports equipment or getting tattoos or piercings from people who are not licensed or places that are not clean.
- Have cuts or scrapes on their skin.
- Live or spend time in crowded places, like daycare centers.
- Engage in a lot of physical contact, such as sports teams.
- Share personal items, like towels, toothbrushes, combs, and sports gear.
- Have a weakened immune system.
- Have skin damage caused by a medical condition, like eczema.

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 will do a test to decide what type of germ is causing the infection. The test will also tell the doctor which antibiotic will work best.

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 of 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 the area was packed with a gauze dressing, your doctor may want your child to come back to have the wound taken care of.
- **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 your hands for 15 to 20 seconds with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer 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.
- Wash clothes and bedding on hottest setting. Use bleach when possible.

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.