

Methicillin-Resistant *Staphylococcus Aureus* (MRSA) Prevention Fact Sheet

What is MRSA?

Staphylococcus aureus, often referred to as “staph,” is a common type of bacteria that is found on the skin and in the nose of healthy persons. Staph bacteria may cause minor skin infections such as boils or more serious infections such as pneumonia and blood poisoning. Certain staph bacteria that have become resistant to first-line antibiotics are called MRSA. MRSA infections are more difficult to treat, but usually respond to antibiotic therapy. MRSA is **not** the “flesh-eating” bacteria.

How is MRSA spread from person to person?

MRSA is usually spread through direct physical contact with an infected person, but may also be transmitted through contact with contaminated objects or surfaces. MRSA is not spread by coughing unless the infected person has pneumonia.

How can I prevent becoming infected with MRSA?

- Wash your hands thoroughly with anti-microbial or anti-germicidal soap and water throughout the day, particularly every time you use the toilet and before every meal.
- Never touch another person’s wounds, infected skin, or dirty bandages.
- Maintain excellent personal hygiene through regular showers and by keeping your living space clean, including the regular laundering of your bed linens.
- Don’t ever share personal hygiene items with others, including toiletries and towels.
- Clean recreational equipment such as weight benches before direct contact with your body or use a clean barrier such as a towel or shirt between your bare skin and exercise equipment.
- Shower after participating in close-contact recreational activities whenever possible.
- Don’t ever get a tattoo while in prison, use injection drugs, or have sexual contact with other inmates.

How does a person know he or she has a MRSA infection?

Swabbing or aspirating pus from a skin infection is the most common way to detect MRSA.

Can MRSA be treated?

Strong antibiotics are usually effective in treating MRSA. Serious or highly resistant MRSA infections may require intravenous (IV) antibiotics in the hospital. Always seek medical attention if you develop a boil, red or inflamed skin, or a sore that does not go away, particularly if it appears to be an insect or spider bite.